PANTHEON E BOOKS

# THE COMPLETE PERSEPOLIS

MARJANE SATRAPI

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*To my parents*

THE COMPLETE

# PERSEPOLIS

MARJANE SATRAPI

PANTHEON

# INTRODUCTION

In the second millennium B.C., while the Elam nation was developing a civilization alongside Babylon, Indo-European invaders gave their name to the immense Iranian plateau where they settled. The word "Iran" was derived from "Ayryana Vaejo," which means "the origin of the Aryans." These people were semi-nomads whose descendants were the Medes and the Persians. The Medes founded the first Iranian nation in the seventh century B.C.; it was later destroyed by Cyrus the Great. He established what became one of the largest empires of the ancient world, the Persian Empire, in the sixth century B.C. Iran was referred to as Persia — its Greek name — until 1935 when Reza Shah, the father of the last Shah of Iran, asked everyone to call the country Iran.

Iran was rich. Because of its wealth and its geographic location, it invited attacks: From Alexander the Great, from its Arab neighbors to the west, from Turkish and Mongolian conquerors, Iran was often subject to foreign domination. Yet the Persian language and culture withstood these invasions. The invaders assimilated into this strong culture, and in some ways they became Iranians themselves.

In the twentieth century, Iran entered a new phase. Reza Shah decided to modernize and westernize the country, but meanwhile a fresh source of wealth was discovered: oil. And with the oil came another invasion. The West, particularly Great Britain, wielded a strong influence on the Iranian economy. During the Second World War, the British, Soviets, and Americans asked Reza Shah to ally himself with them against Germany. But Reza Shah, who sympathized with the Germans, declared Iran a neutral zone. So the Allies invaded and occupied Iran. Reza Shah was sent into exile and was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was known simply as the Shah.

In 1951, Mohammed Mossadeq, then prime minister of Iran, nationalized the oil industry. In retaliation, Great Britain organized an embargo on all exports of oil from Iran. In 1953, the CIA, with the help of British intelligence, organized a coup against him. Mossadeq was overthrown and the Shah, who had earlier escaped from the country, returned to power. The Shah stayed on the throne until 1979, when he fled Iran to escape the Islamic revolution.

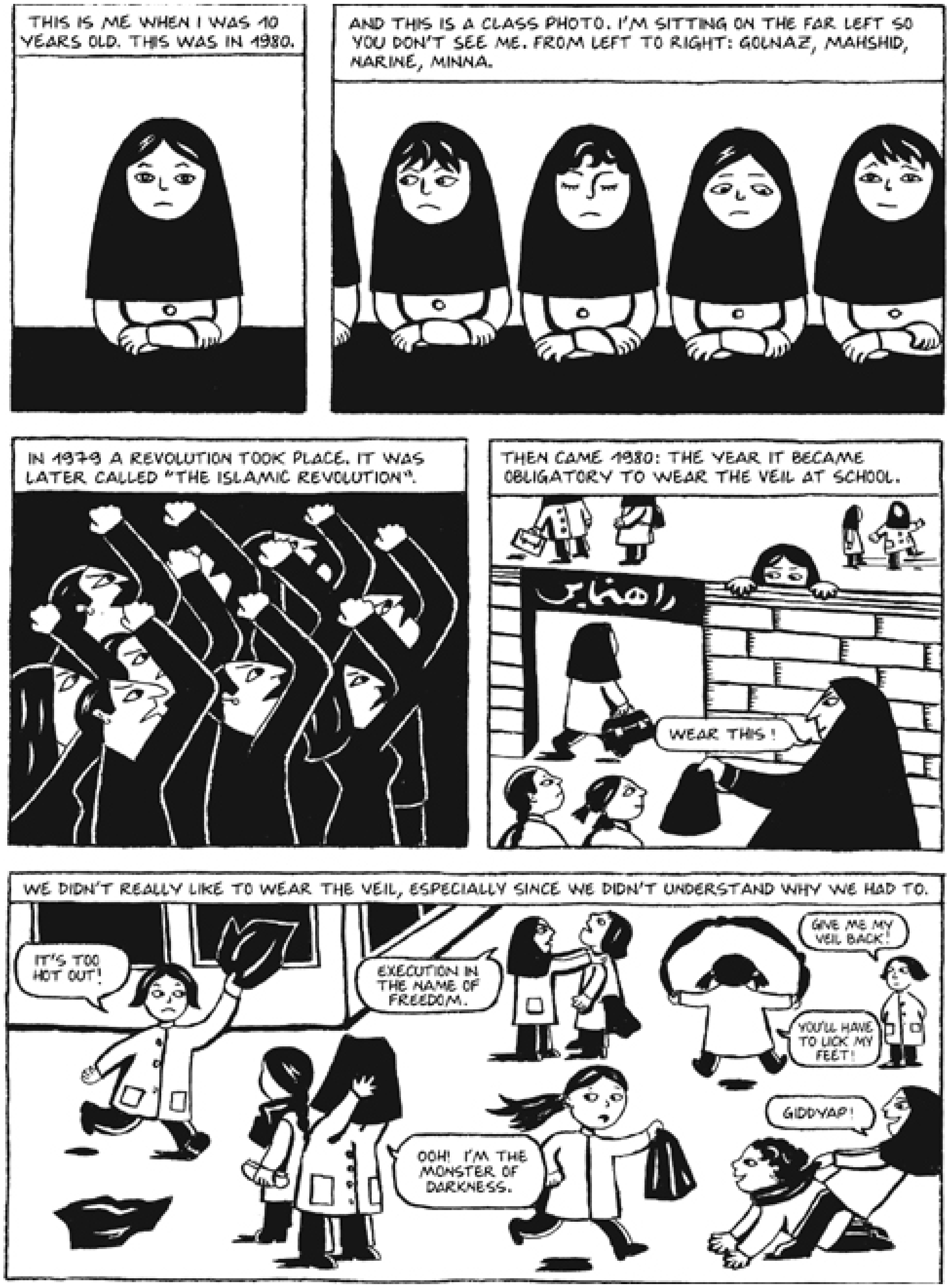
Since then, this old and great civilization has been discussed mostly in connection with fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism. As an Iranian who has lived more than half of my life in Iran, I know that this image is far from the truth. This is why writing *Persepolis* was so important to me. I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists. I also don't want those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under various repressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and flee their homeland to be forgotten.

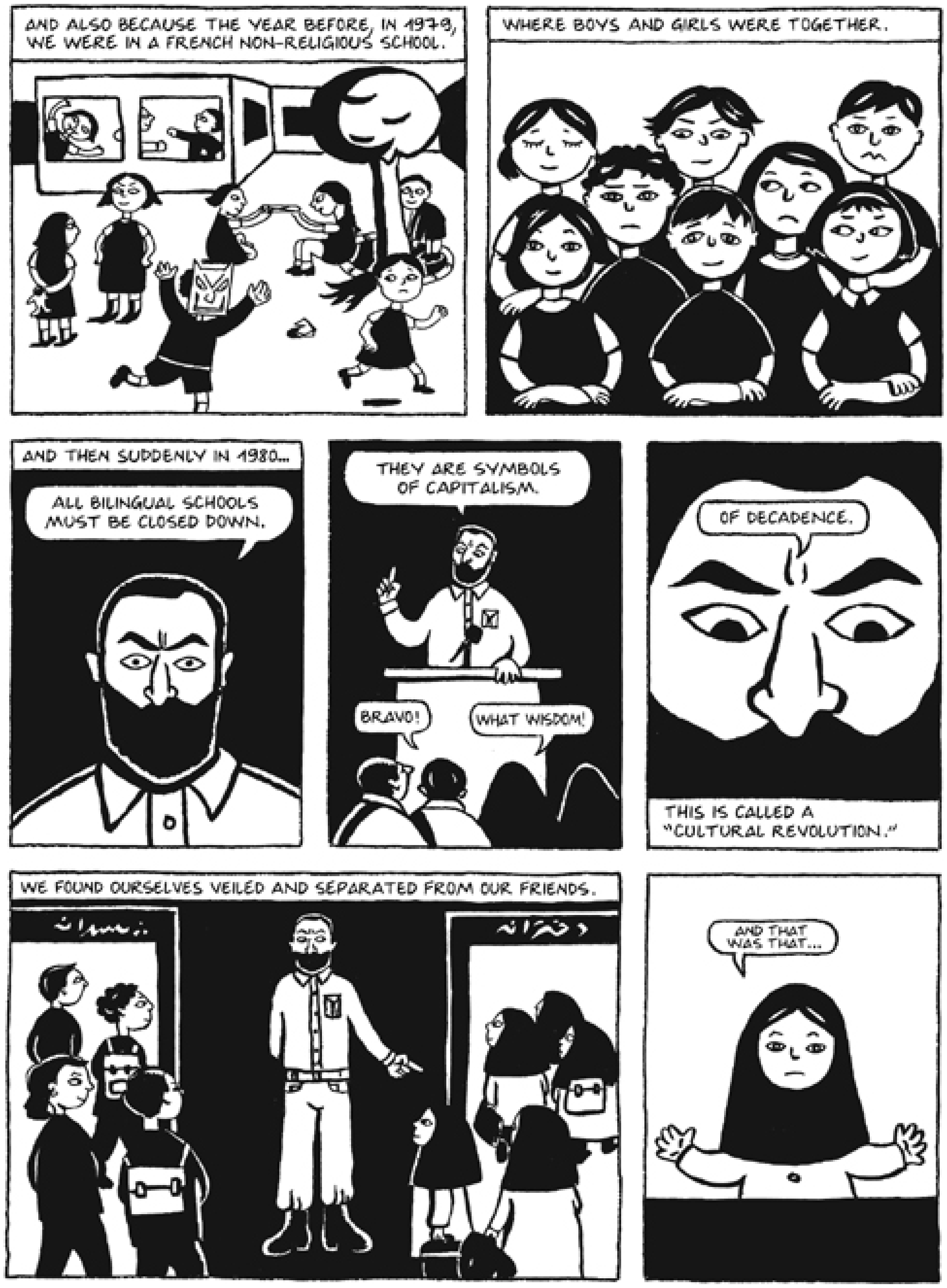
One can forgive but one should never forget.

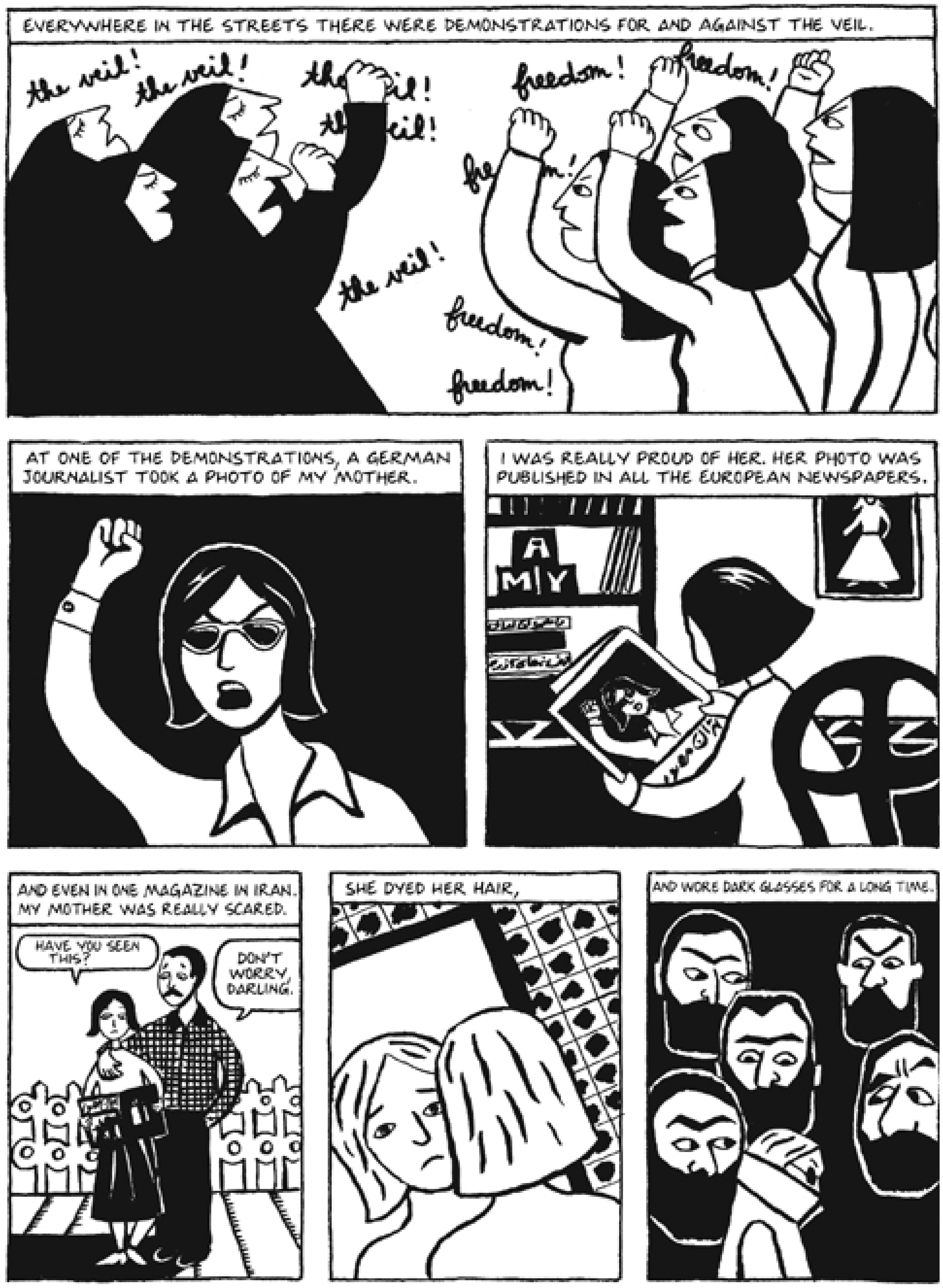
Marjane Satrapi

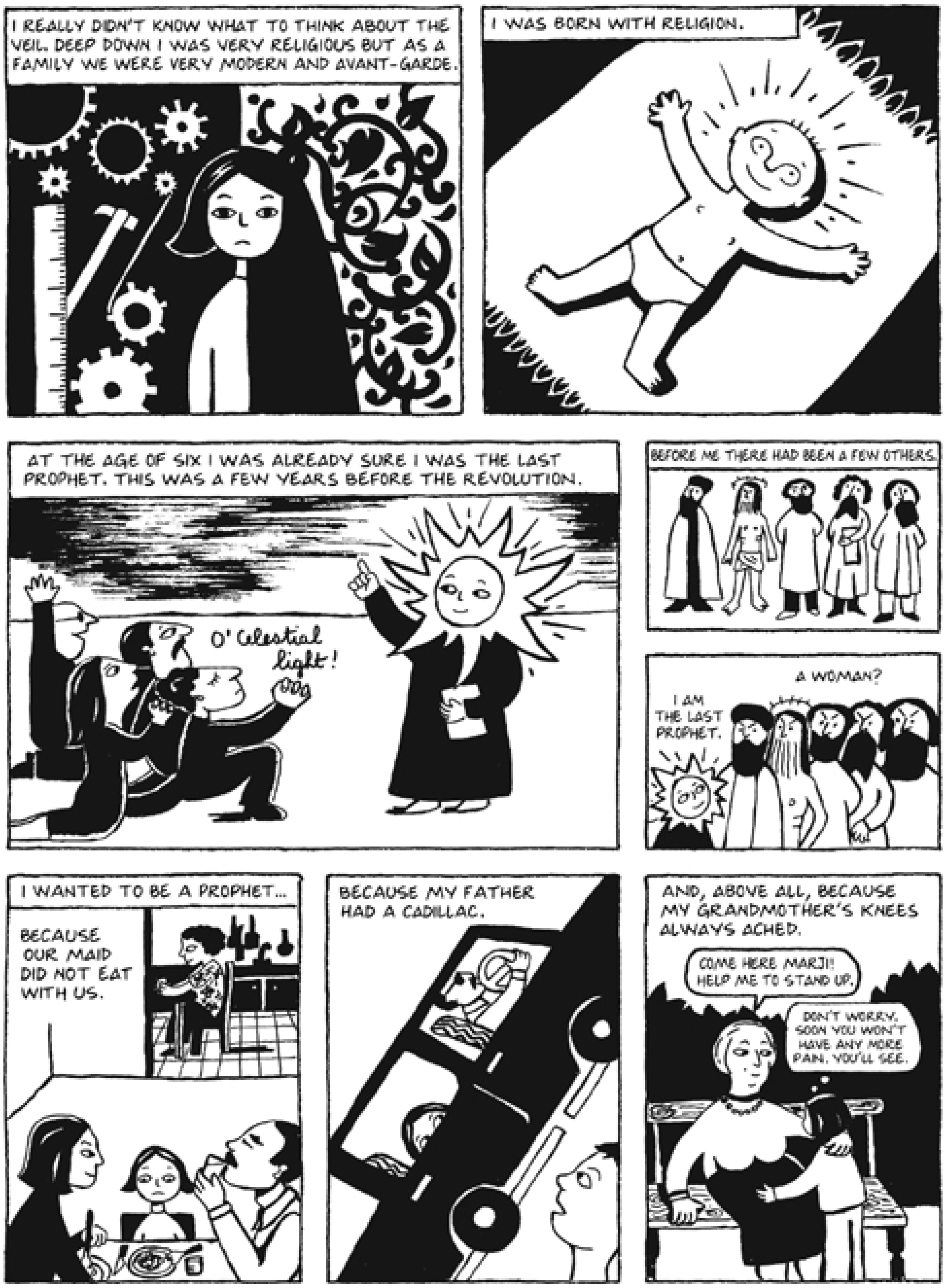
Paris, September 2002

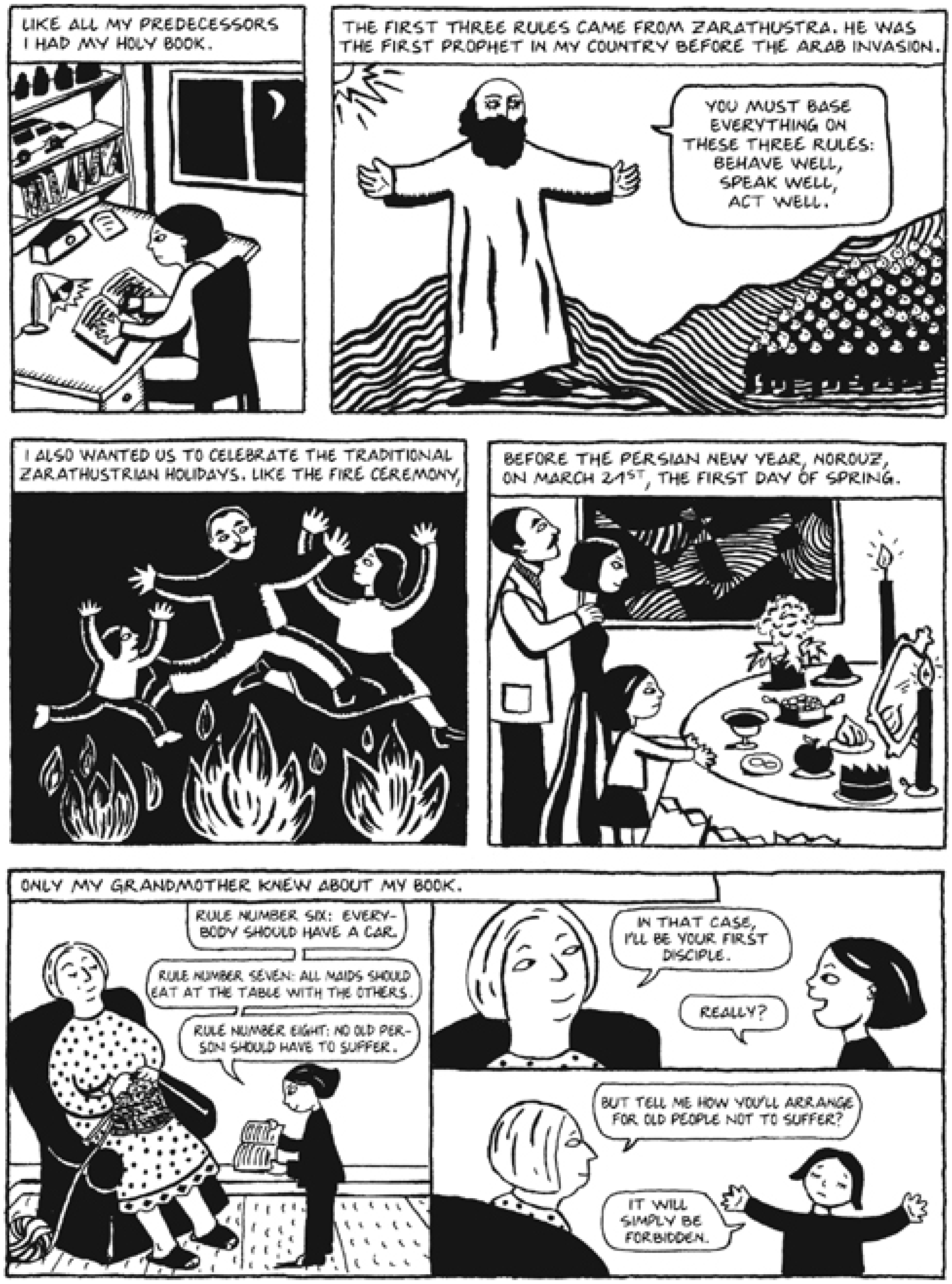
# THE VEIL

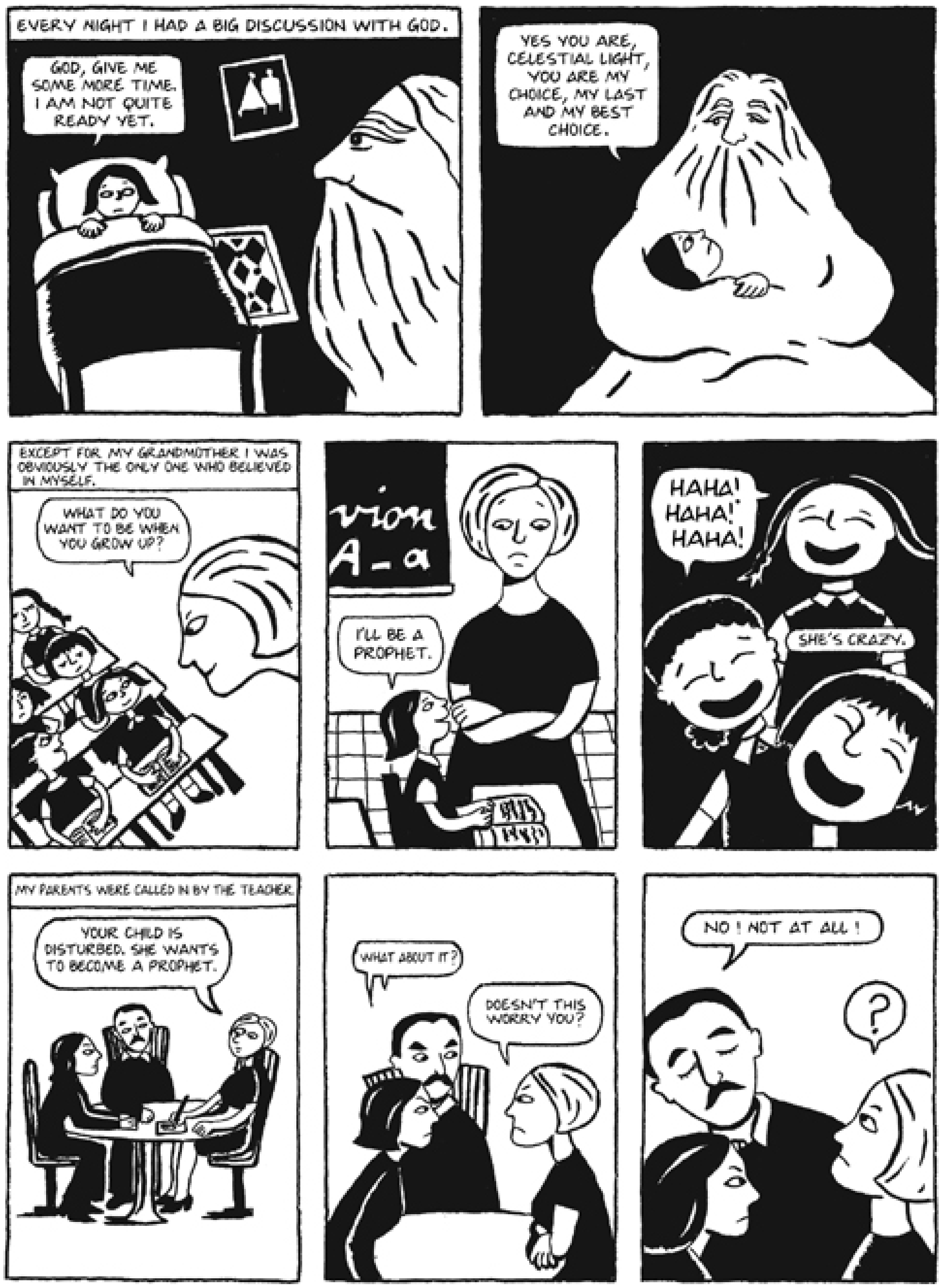

THIS IS ME WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD. THIS WAS IN 1980.
AND THIS IS A CLASS PHOTO. I'M SITTING ON THE FAR LEFT SO YOU DON'T SEE ME. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GOLNAZ, MAHSHID, NARINE, MINNA.
IN 1979 A REVOLUTION TOOK PLACE. IT WAS LATER CALLED "THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION".
THEN CAME 1980: THE YEAR IT BECAME OBLIGATORY TO WEAR THE VEIL AT SCHOOL.
WEAR THIS!
WE DIDN'T REALLY LIKE TO WEAR THE VEIL, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAD TO.
IT'S TOO HOT OUT!
EXECUTION IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM.
GIVE ME MY VEIL BACK!
YOU'LL HAVE TO LICK MY FEET!
GIDDYAP!
OOH! I'M THE MONSTER OF DARKNESS.

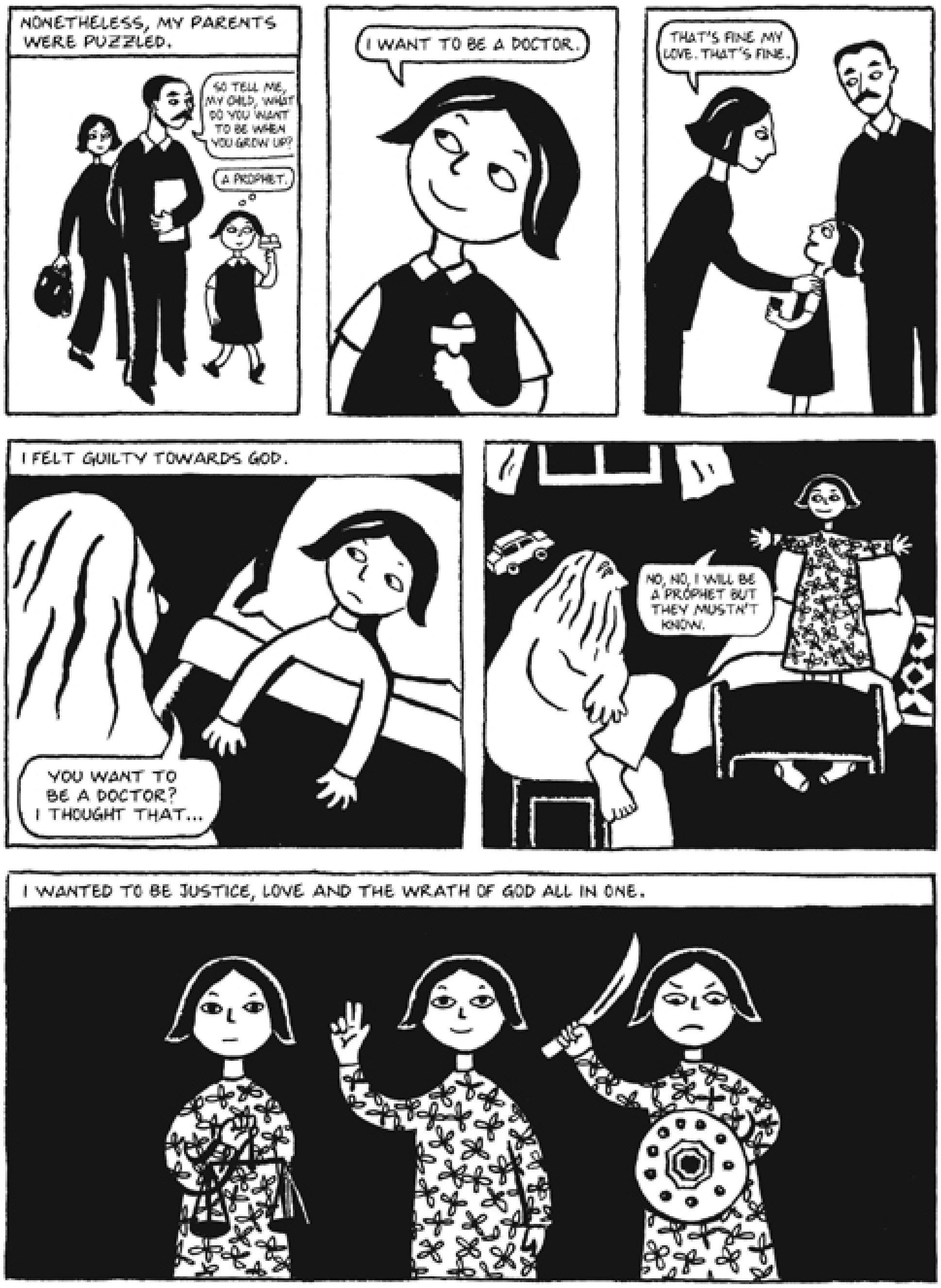

AND ALSO BECAUSE THE YEAR BEFORE, IN 1979, WE WERE IN A FRENCH NON-RELIGIOUS SCHOOL.
WHERE BOYS AND GIRLS WERE TOGETHER.
AND THEN SUDDENLY IN 1980...
ALL BILINGUAL SCHOOLS MUST BE CLOSED DOWN.
THEY ARE SYMBOLS OF CAPITALISM.
BRAVO!
WHAT WISDOM!
OF DECADENCE.
THIS IS CALLED A "CULTURAL REVOLUTION."
WE FOUND OURSELVES VEILED AND SEPARATED FROM OUR FRIENDS.
پسرانه
دخترانه
AND THAT WAS THAT...


EVERYWHERE IN THE STREETS THERE WERE DEMONSTRATIONS FOR AND AGAINST THE VEIL.
the veil!
the veil!
the veil!
the veil!
the veil!
freedom!
freedom!
freedom!
freedom!
freedom!
AT ONE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS, A GERMAN JOURNALIST TOOK A PHOTO OF MY MOTHER.
I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HER. HER PHOTO WAS PUBLISHED IN ALL THE EUROPEAN NEWSPAPERS.
AMY
AND EVEN IN ONE MAGAZINE IN IRAN. MY MOTHER WAS REALLY SCARED.
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS?
DON'T WORRY, DARLING.
SHE DYED HER HAIR,
AND WORE DARK GLASSES FOR A LONG TIME.

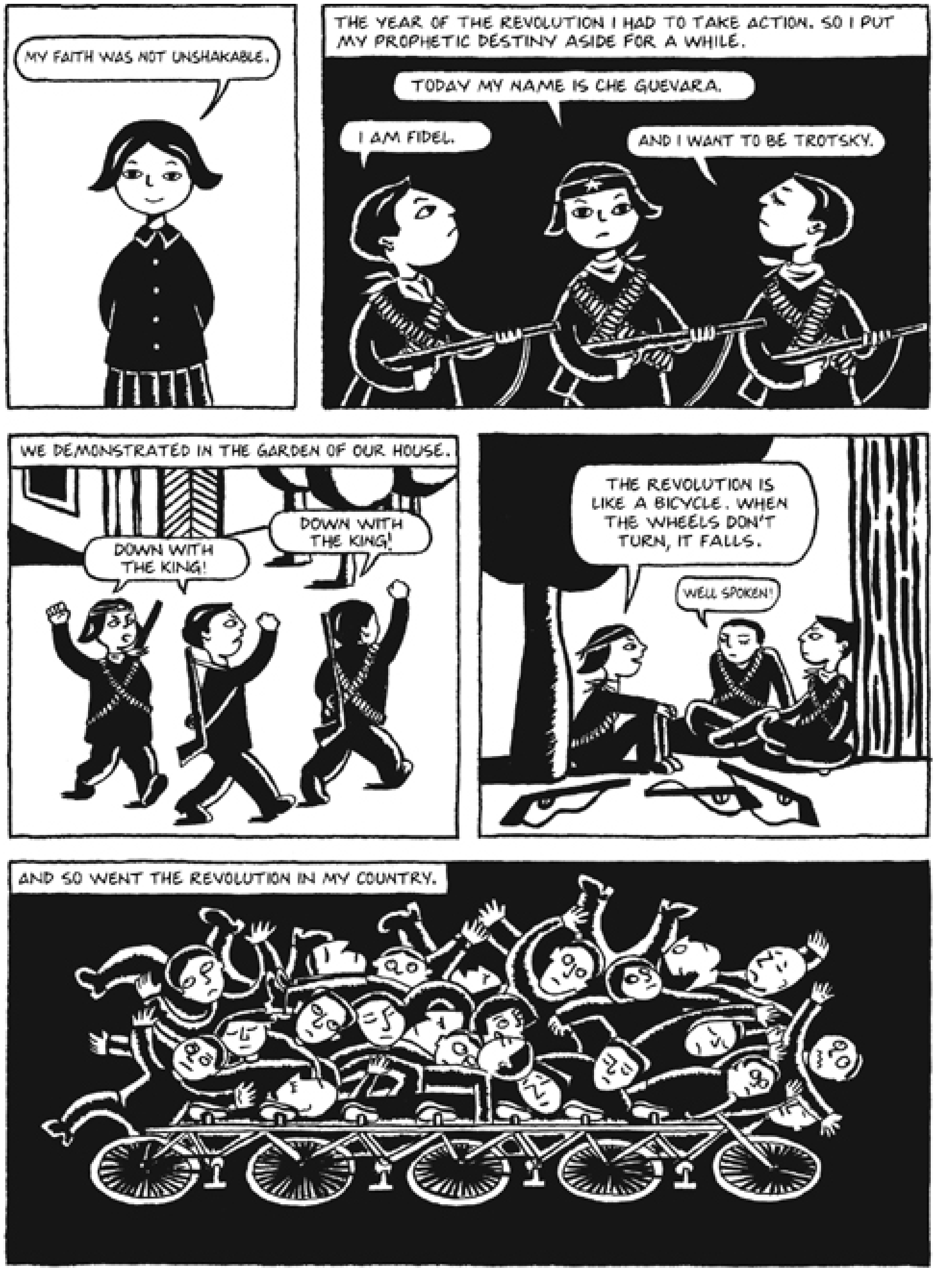

I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE VEIL. DEEP DOWN I WAS VERY RELIGIOUS BUT AS A FAMILY WE WERE VERY MODERN AND AVANT-GARDE.
I WAS BORN WITH RELIGION.
AT THE AGE OF SIX I WAS ALREADY SURE I WAS THE LAST PROPHET. THIS WAS A FEW YEARS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.
O' Celestial light!
BEFORE ME THERE HAD BEEN A FEW OTHERS.
I AM THE LAST PROPHET.
A WOMAN?
I WANTED TO BE A PROPHET...
BECAUSE OUR MAID DID NOT EAT WITH US.
BECAUSE MY FATHER HAD A CADILLAC.
AND, ABOVE ALL, BECAUSE MY GRANDMOTHER'S KNEES ALWAYS ACHED.
COME HERE MARJI! HELP ME TO STAND UP.
DON'T WORRY, SOON YOU WON'T HAVE ANY MORE PAIN. YOU'LL SEE.

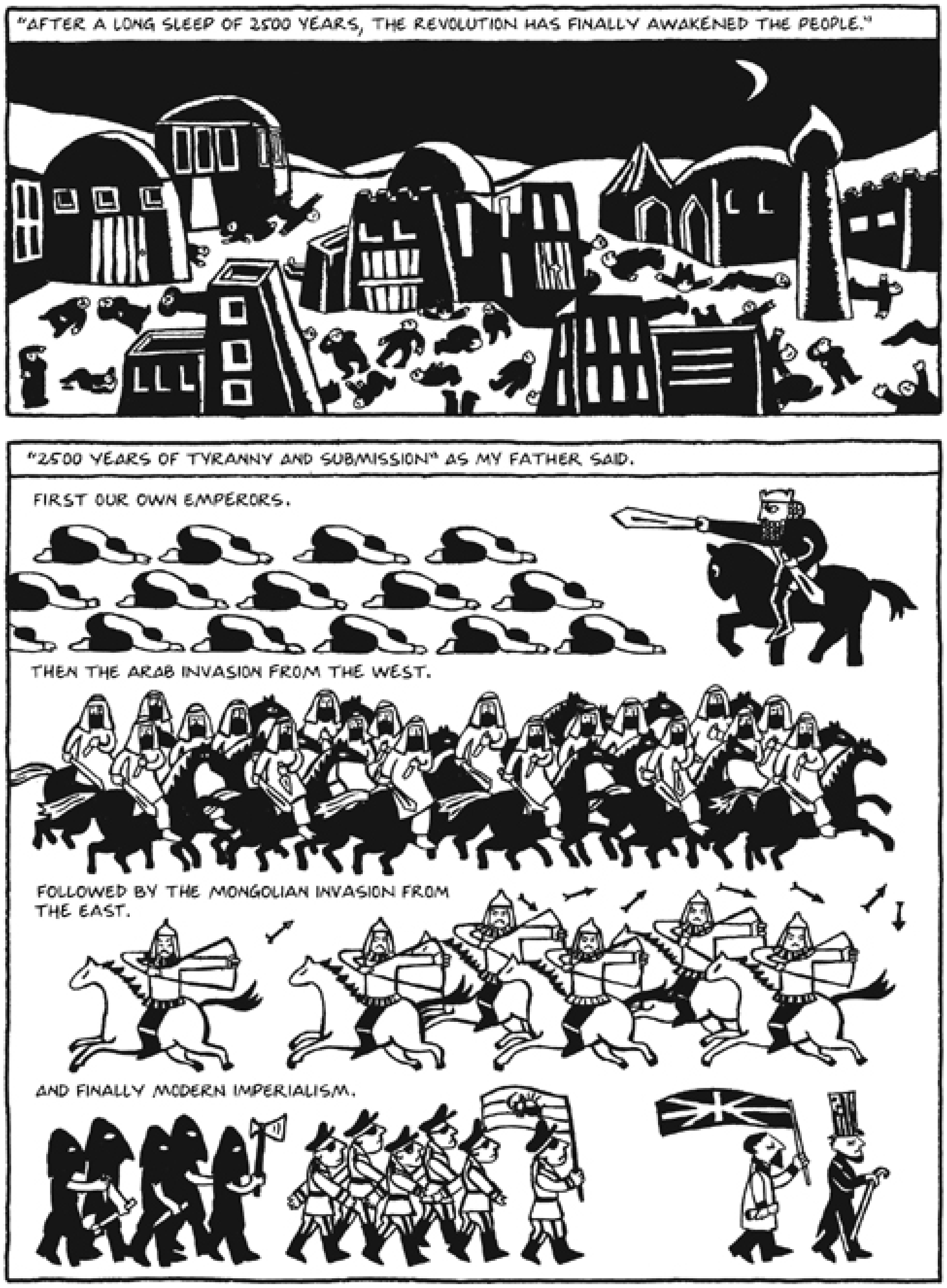

LIKE ALL MY PREDECESSORS I HAD MY HOLY BOOK.
THE FIRST THREE RULES CAME FROM ZARATHUSTRA. HE WAS THE FIRST PROPHET IN MY COUNTRY BEFORE THE ARAB INVASION.
YOU MUST BASE EVERYTHING ON THESE THREE RULES: BEHAVE WELL, SPEAK WELL, ACT WELL.
I ALSO WANTED US TO CELEBRATE THE TRADITIONAL ZARATHUSTRIAN HOLIDAYS. LIKE THE FIRE CEREMONY,
BEFORE THE PERSIAN NEW YEAR, NOROUZ, ON MARCH 21ST, THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.
ONLY MY GRANDMOTHER KNEW ABOUT MY BOOK.
RULE NUMBER SIX: EVERYBODY SHOULD HAVE A CAR.
RULE NUMBER SEVEN: ALL MAIDS SHOULD EAT AT THE TABLE WITH THE OTHERS.
RULE NUMBER EIGHT: NO OLD PERSON SHOULD HAVE TO SUFFER.
IN THAT CASE, I'LL BE YOUR FIRST DISCIPLE.
REALLY?
BUT TELL ME HOW YOU'LL ARRANGE FOR OLD PEOPLE NOT TO SUFFER?
IT WILL SIMPLY BE FORBIDDEN.

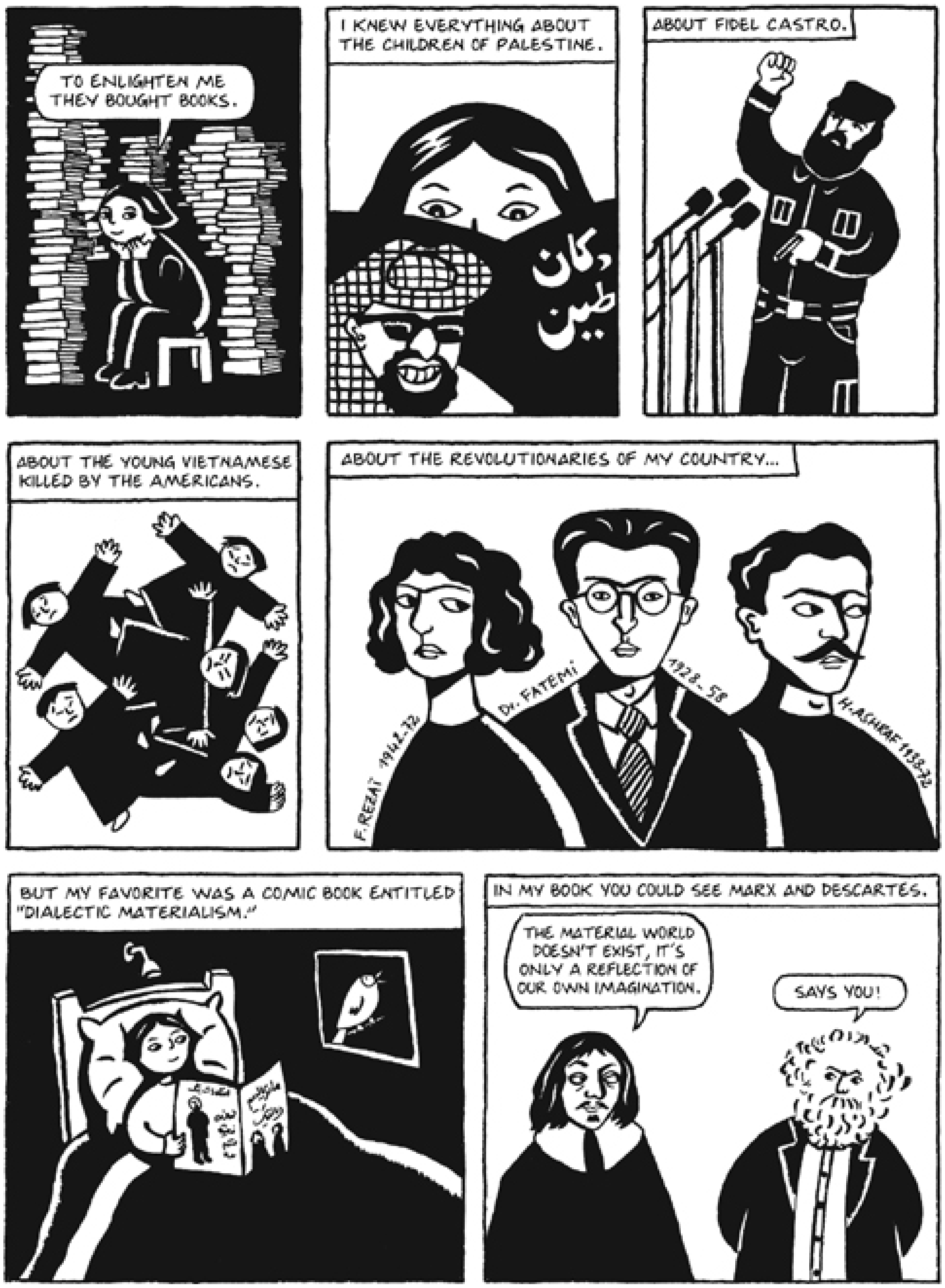

EVERY NIGHT I HAD A BIG DISCUSSION WITH GOD.
GOD, GIVE ME SOME MORE TIME. I AM NOT QUITE READY YET.
YES YOU ARE, CELESTIAL LIGHT, YOU ARE MY CHOICE, MY LAST AND MY BEST CHOICE.
EXCEPT FOR MY GRANDMOTHER I WAS OBVIOUSLY THE ONLY ONE WHO BELIEVED IN MYSELF.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?
vion
A – a
I'LL BE A PROPHET.
HAHA! HAHA! HAHA!
SHE'S CRAZY.
MY PARENTS WERE CALLED IN BY THE TEACHER.
YOUR CHILD IS DISTURBED. SHE WANTS TO BECOME A PROPHET.
WHAT ABOUT IT?
DOESN'T THIS WORRY YOU?
NO ! NOT AT ALL !
?

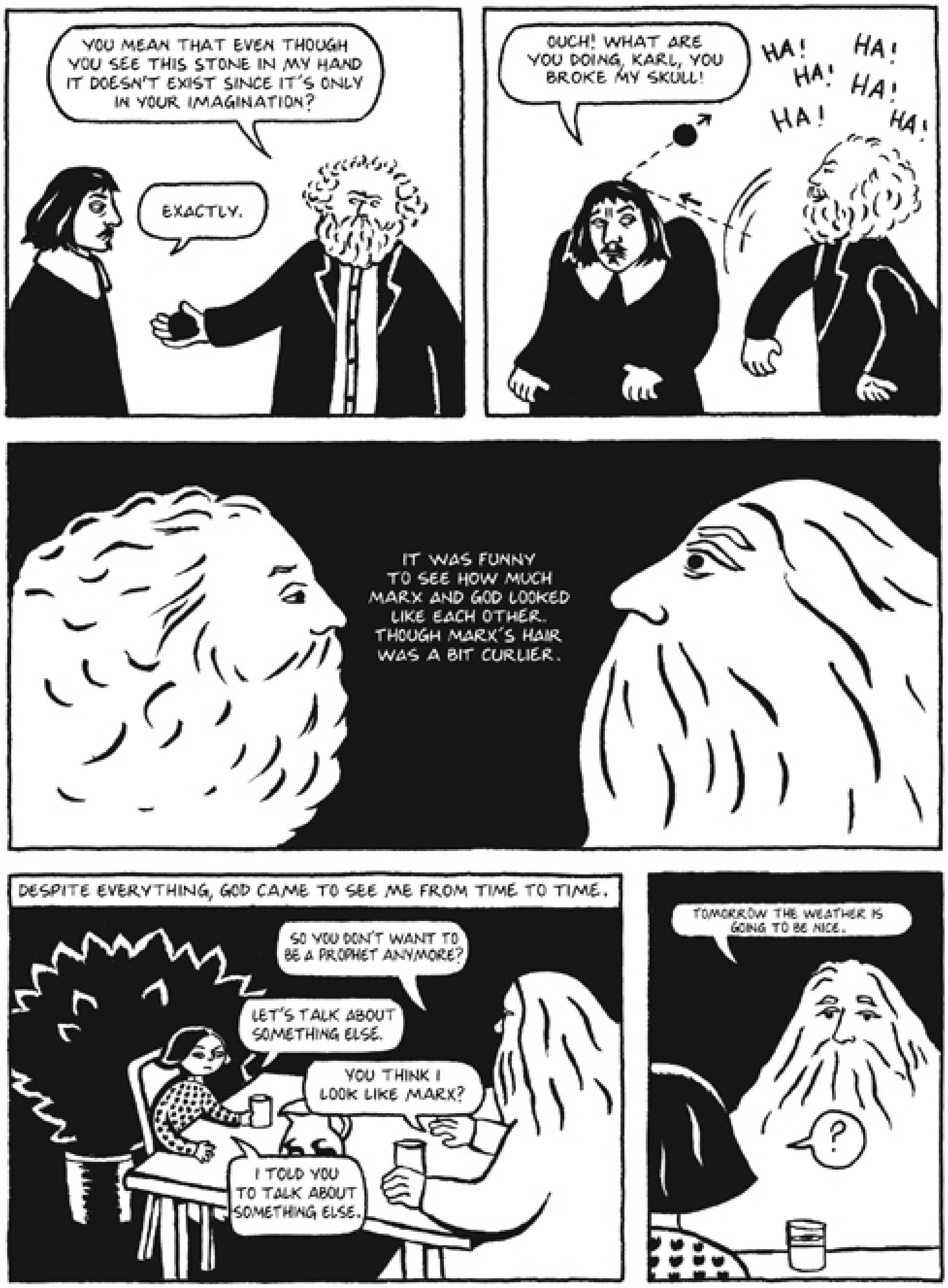

NONETHELESS, MY PARENTS WERE PUZZLED.
SO TELL ME, MY CHILD, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?
A PROPHET.
I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR.
THAT'S FINE MY LOVE. THAT'S FINE.
I FELT GUILTY TOWARDS GOD.
YOU WANT TO BE A DOCTOR? I THOUGHT THAT...
NO, NO, I WILL BE A PROPHET BUT THEY MUSTN'T KNOW.
I WANTED TO BE JUSTICE, LOVE AND THE WRATH OF GOD ALL IN ONE.

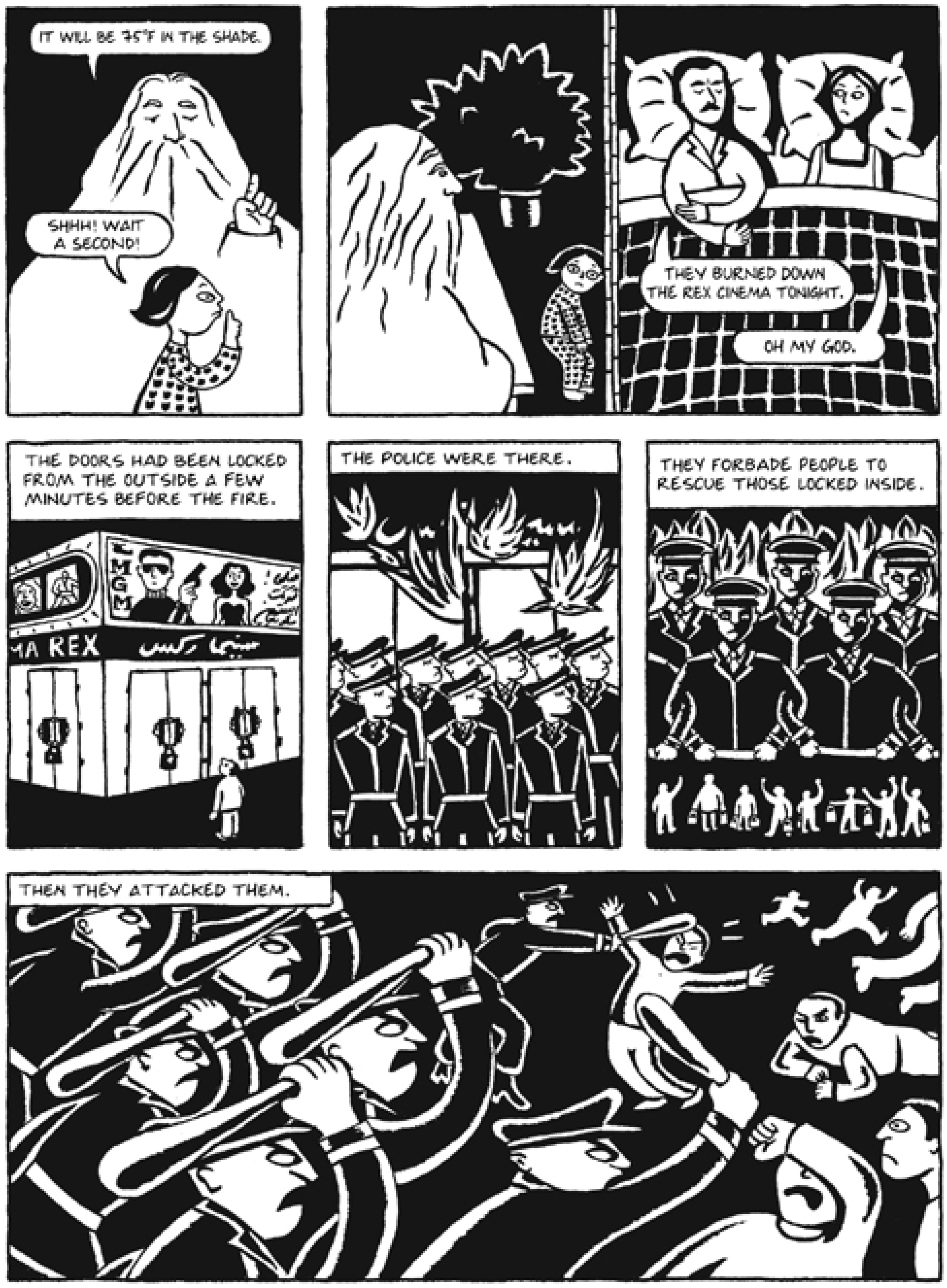
# THE BICYCLE

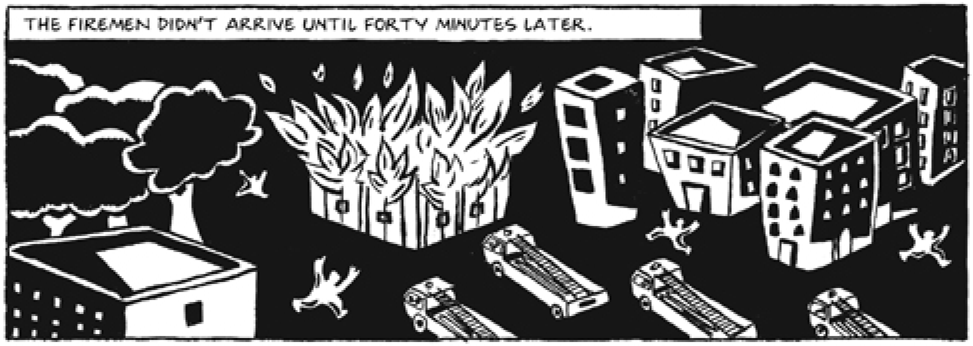

MY FAITH WAS NOT UNSHAKABLE.
THE YEAR OF THE REVOLUTION I HAD TO TAKE ACTION. SO I PUT MY PROPHETIC DESTINY ASIDE FOR A WHILE.
TODAY MY NAME IS CHE GUEVARA.
I AM FIDEL.
AND I WANT TO BE TROTSKY.
WE DEMONSTRATED IN THE GARDEN OF OUR HOUSE.
DOWN WITH THE KING!
DOWN WITH THE KING!
THE REVOLUTION IS LIKE A BICYCLE. WHEN THE WHEELS DON'T TURN, IT FALLS.
WELL SPOKEN!
AND SO WENT THE REVOLUTION IN MY COUNTRY.


"AFTER A LONG SLEEP OF 2500 YEARS, THE REVOLUTION HAS FINALLY AWAKENED THE PEOPLE."
"2500 YEARS OF TYRANNY AND SUBMISSION" AS MY FATHER SAID.
FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.
THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.
FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.
AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.

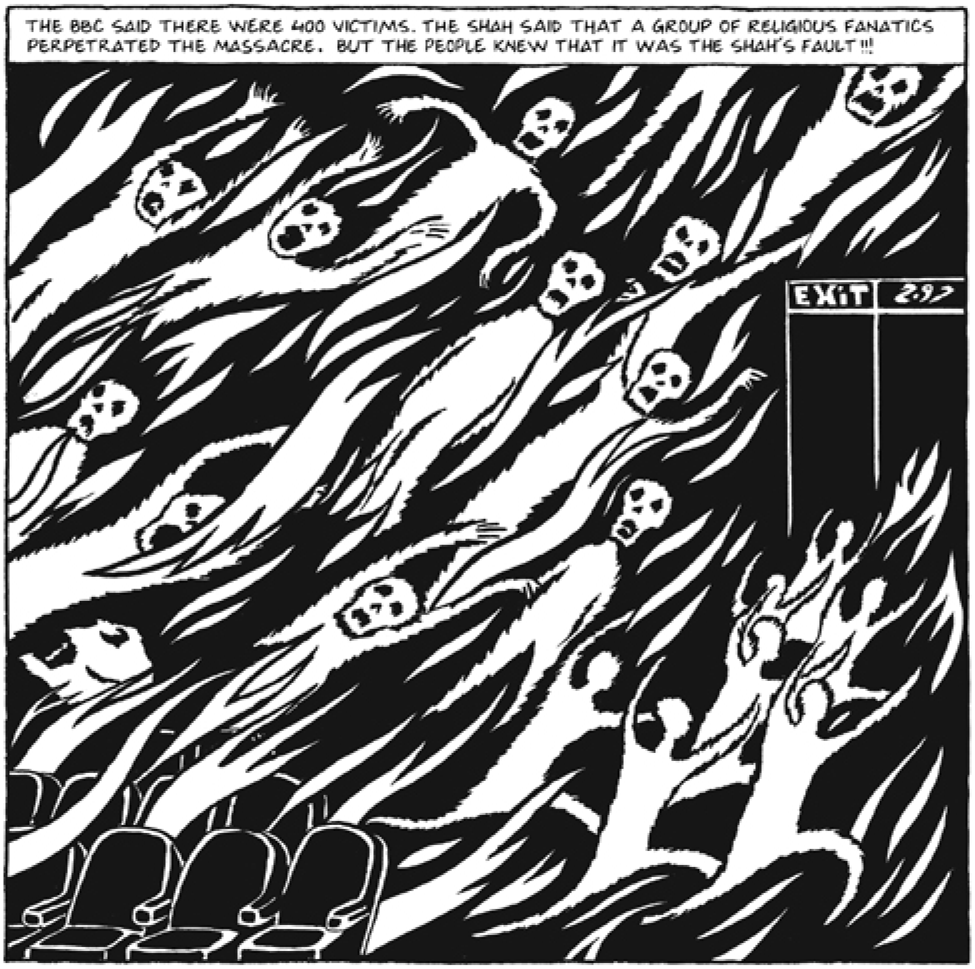

TO ENLIGHTEN ME THEY BOUGHT BOOKS.
I KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE CHILDREN OF PALESTINE.
دکان
طین
ABOUT FIDEL CASTRO.
ABOUT THE YOUNG VIETNAMESE KILLED BY THE AMERICANS.
ABOUT THE REVOLUTIONARIES OF MY COUNTRY...
F. REZAÏ 1944-72
Dr. FATEMI 1928-58
H. ASHRAF 1938-72
BUT MY FAVORITE WAS A COMIC BOOK ENTITLED "DIALECTIC MATERIALISM."
IN MY BOOK YOU COULD SEE MARX AND DESCARTES.
THE MATERIAL WORLD DOESN'T EXIST, IT'S ONLY A REFLECTION OF OUR OWN IMAGINATION.
SAYS YOU!


YOU MEAN THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU SEE THIS STONE IN MY HAND IT DOESN'T EXIST SINCE IT'S ONLY IN YOUR IMAGINATION?
EXACTLY.
OUCH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING, KARL, YOU BROKE MY SKULL!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE HOW MUCH MARX AND GOD LOOKED LIKE EACH OTHER. THOUGH MARX'S HAIR WAS A BIT CURLIER.
DESPITE EVERYTHING, GOD CAME TO SEE ME FROM TIME TO TIME.
SO YOU DON'T WANT TO BE A PROPHET ANYMORE?
LET'S TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
YOU THINK I LOOK LIKE MARX?
I TOLD YOU TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
TOMORROW THE WEATHER IS GOING TO BE NICE.
?

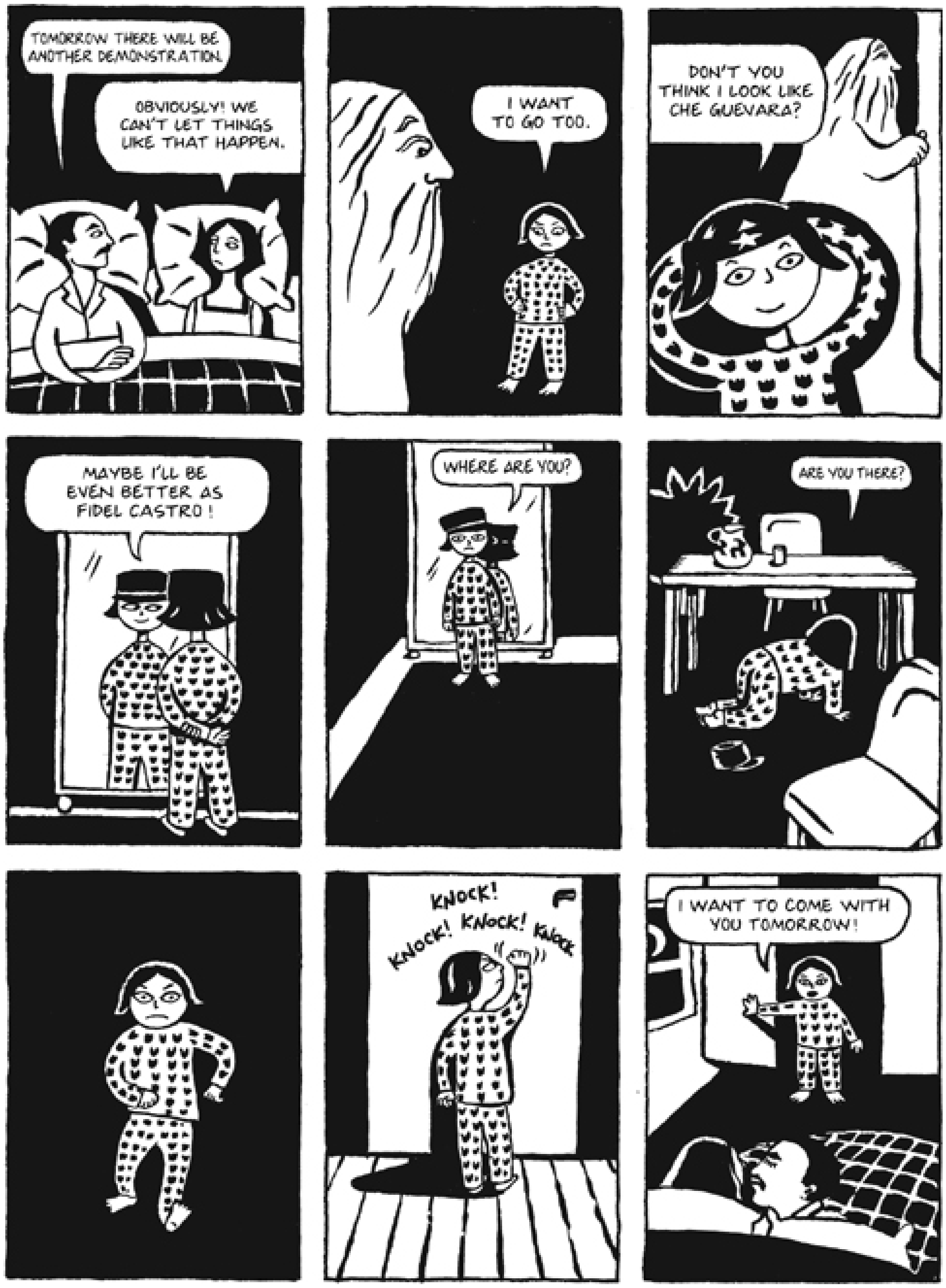

IT WILL BE 75°F IN THE SHADE.
SHHH! WAIT A SECOND!
THEY BURNED DOWN THE REX CINEMA TONIGHT.
OH MY GOD.
THE DOORS HAD BEEN LOCKED FROM THE OUTSIDE A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE FIRE.
MGM
MA REX
سینما رکس
THE POLICE WERE THERE.
THEY FORBADE PEOPLE TO RESCUE THOSE LOCKED INSIDE.
THEN THEY ATTACKED THEM.

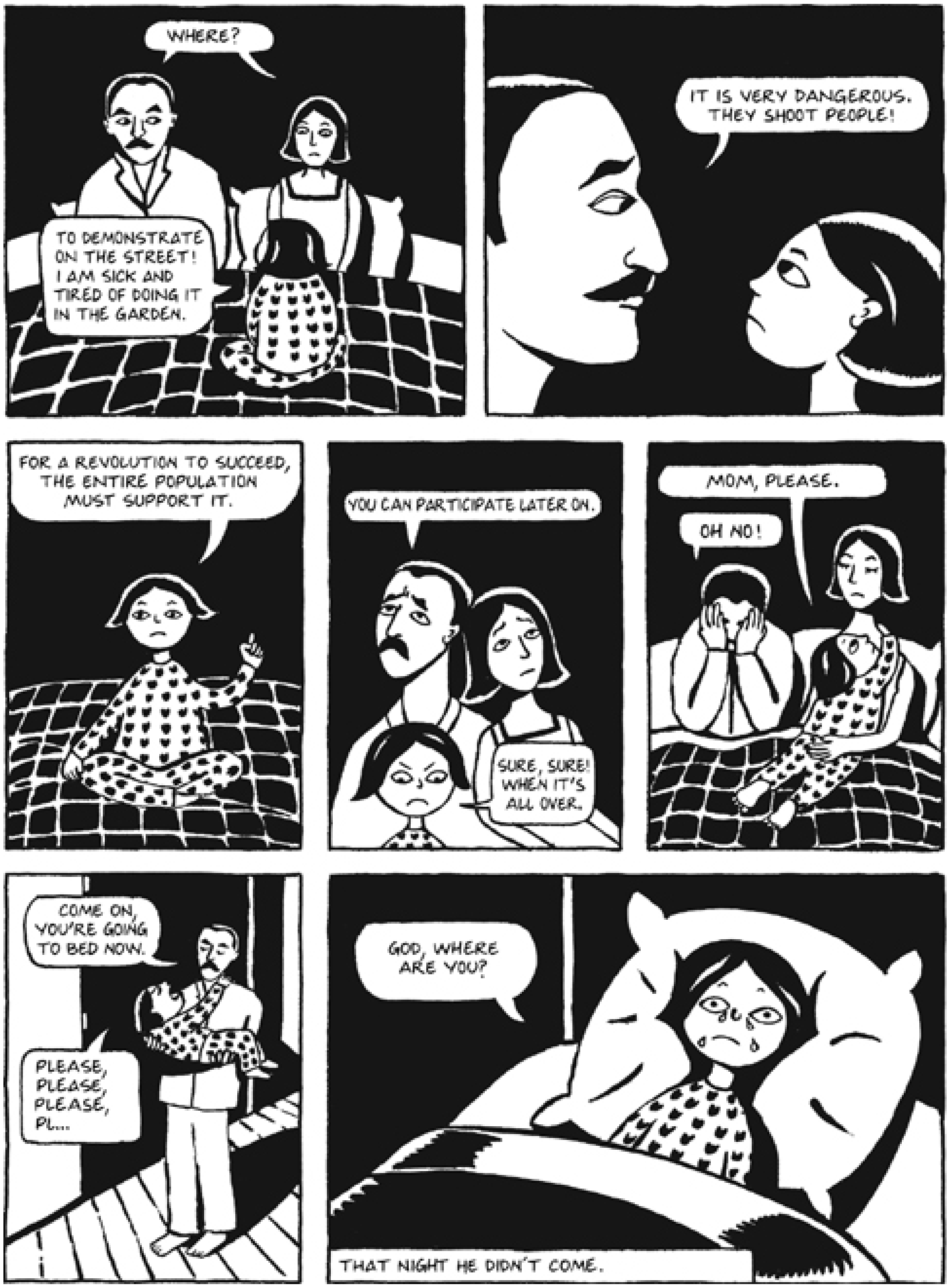


THE FIREMEN DIDN'T ARRIVE UNTIL FORTY MINUTES LATER.

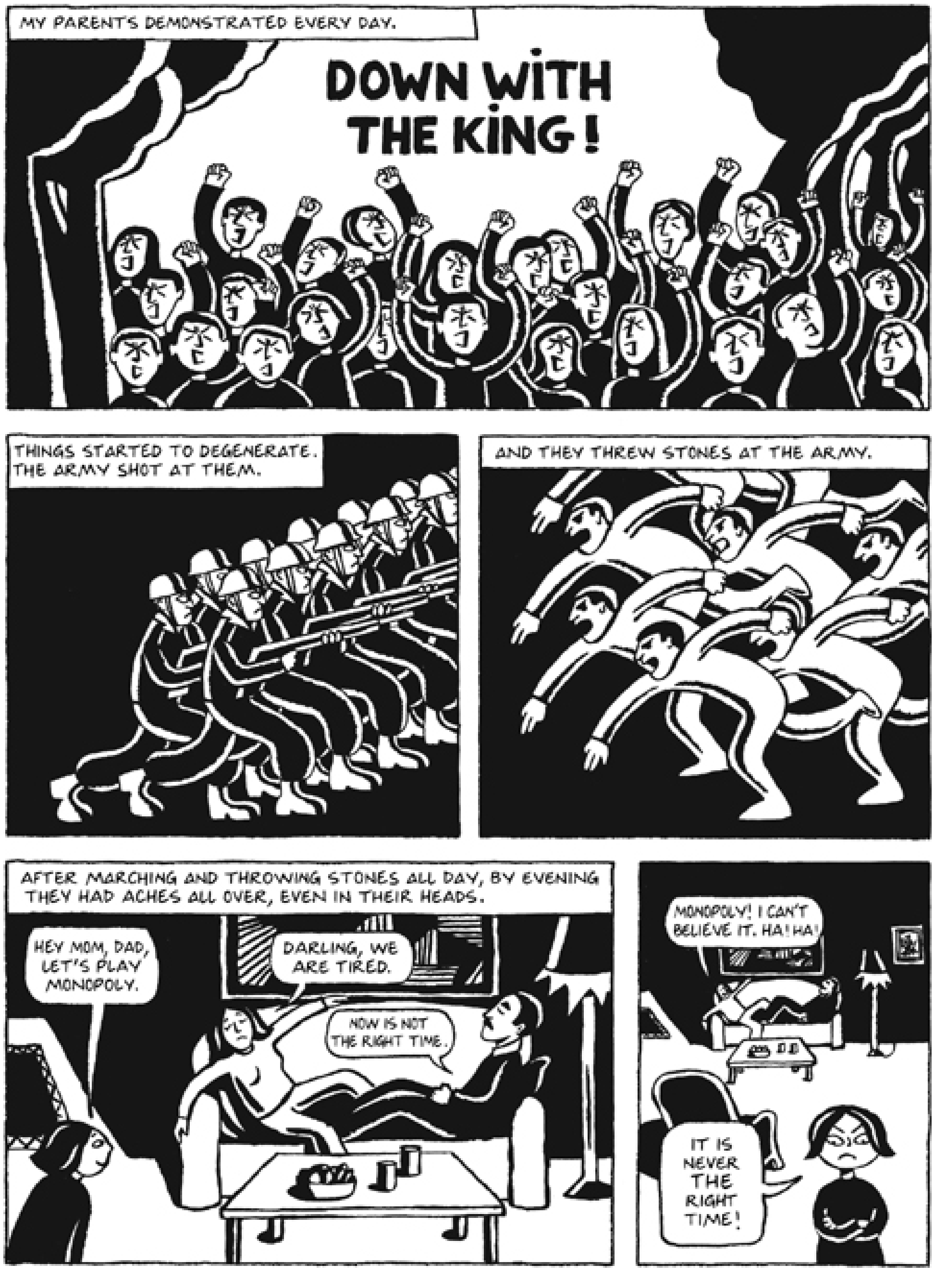


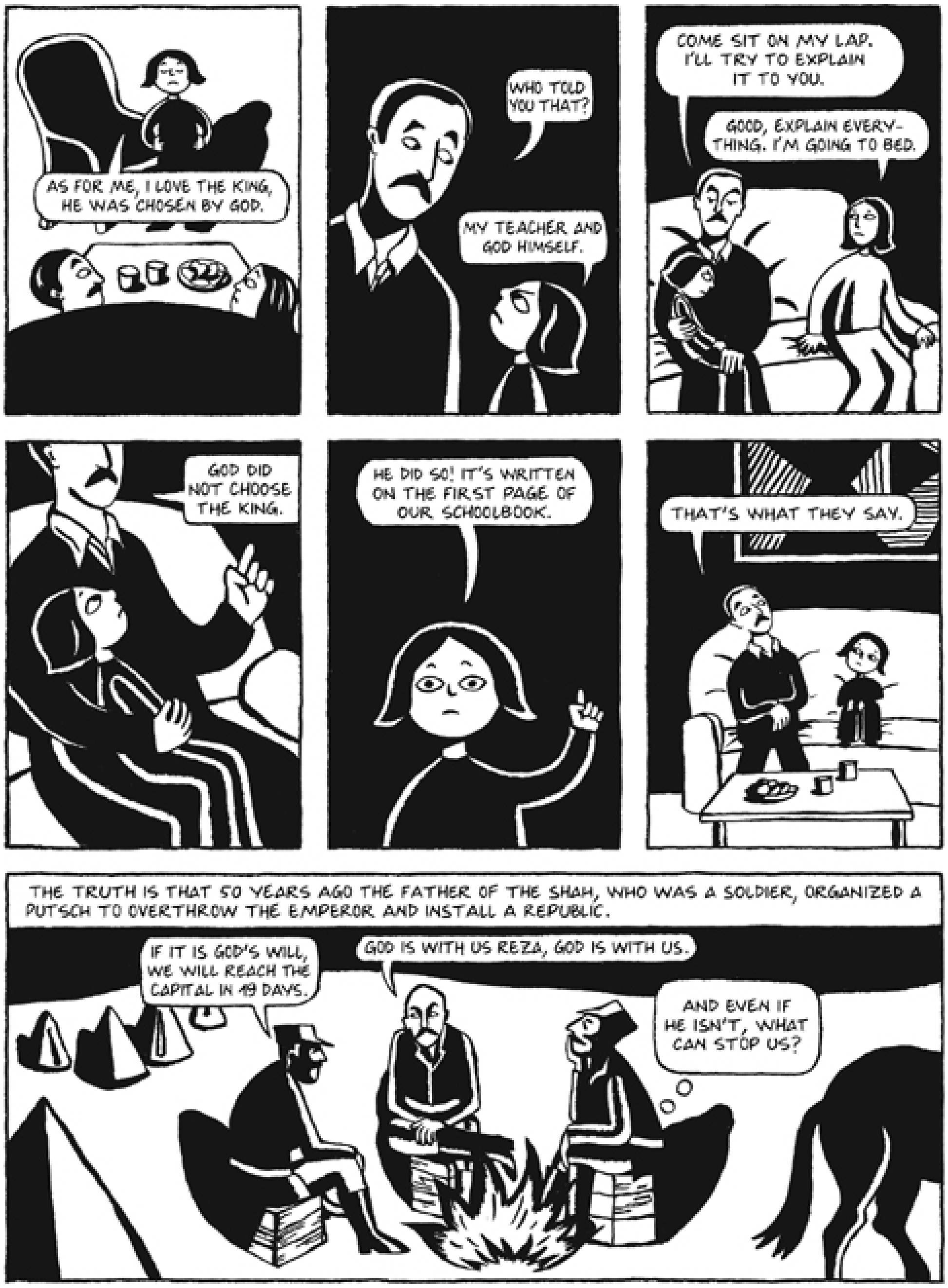
THE BBC SAID THERE WERE 400 VICTIMS. THE SHAH SAID THAT A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS PERPETRATED THE MASSACRE. BUT THE PEOPLE KNEW THAT IT WAS THE SHAH'S FAULT!!!

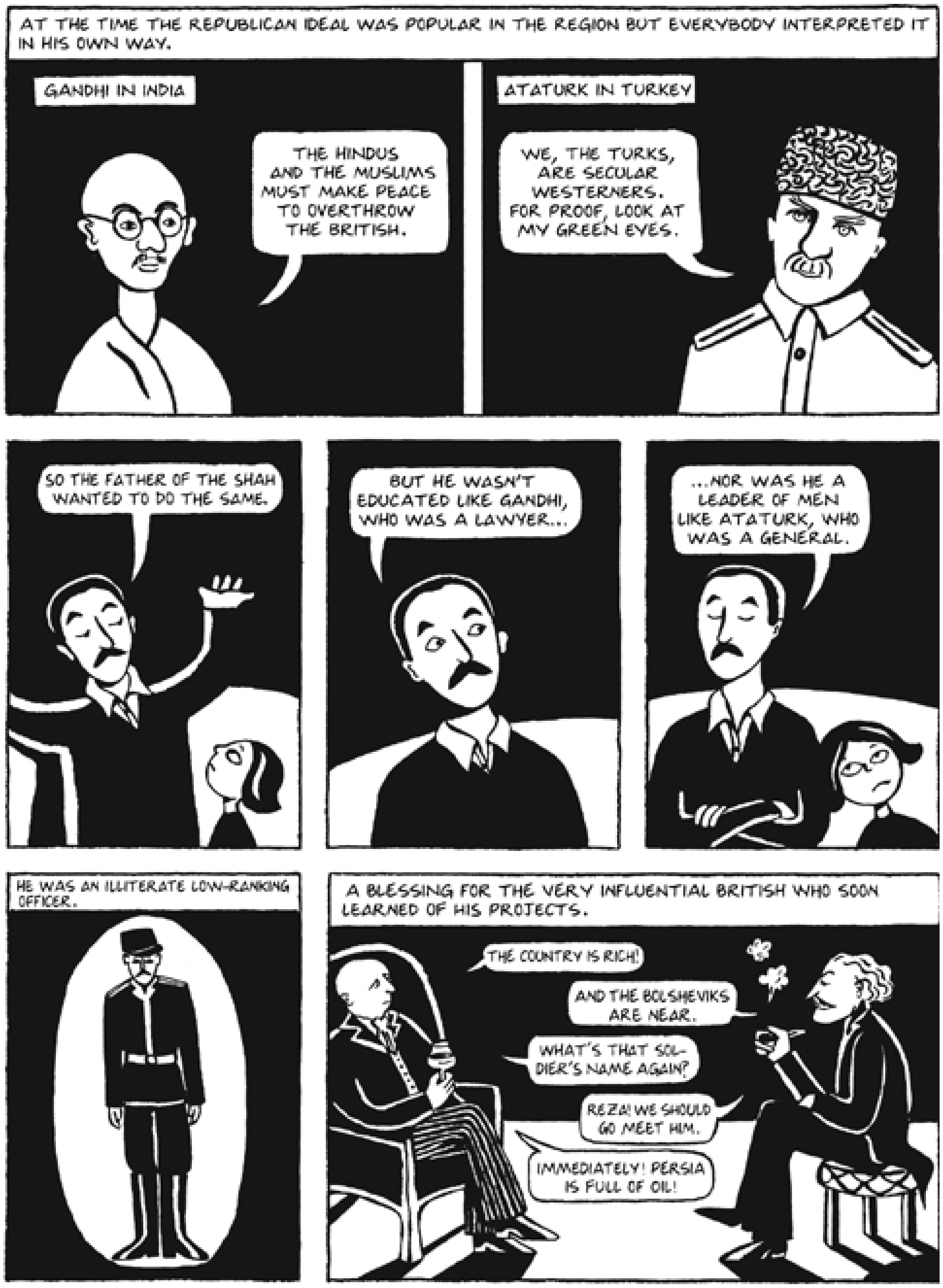

TOMORROW THERE WILL BE ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION.
OBVIOUSLY! WE CAN'T LET THINGS LIKE THAT HAPPEN.
I WANT TO GO TOO.
DON'T YOU THINK I LOOK LIKE CHE GUEVARA?
MAYBE I'LL BE EVEN BETTER AS FIDEL CASTRO!
WHERE ARE YOU?
ARE YOU THERE?
KNOCK!
KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK
I WANT TO COME WITH YOU TOMORROW!

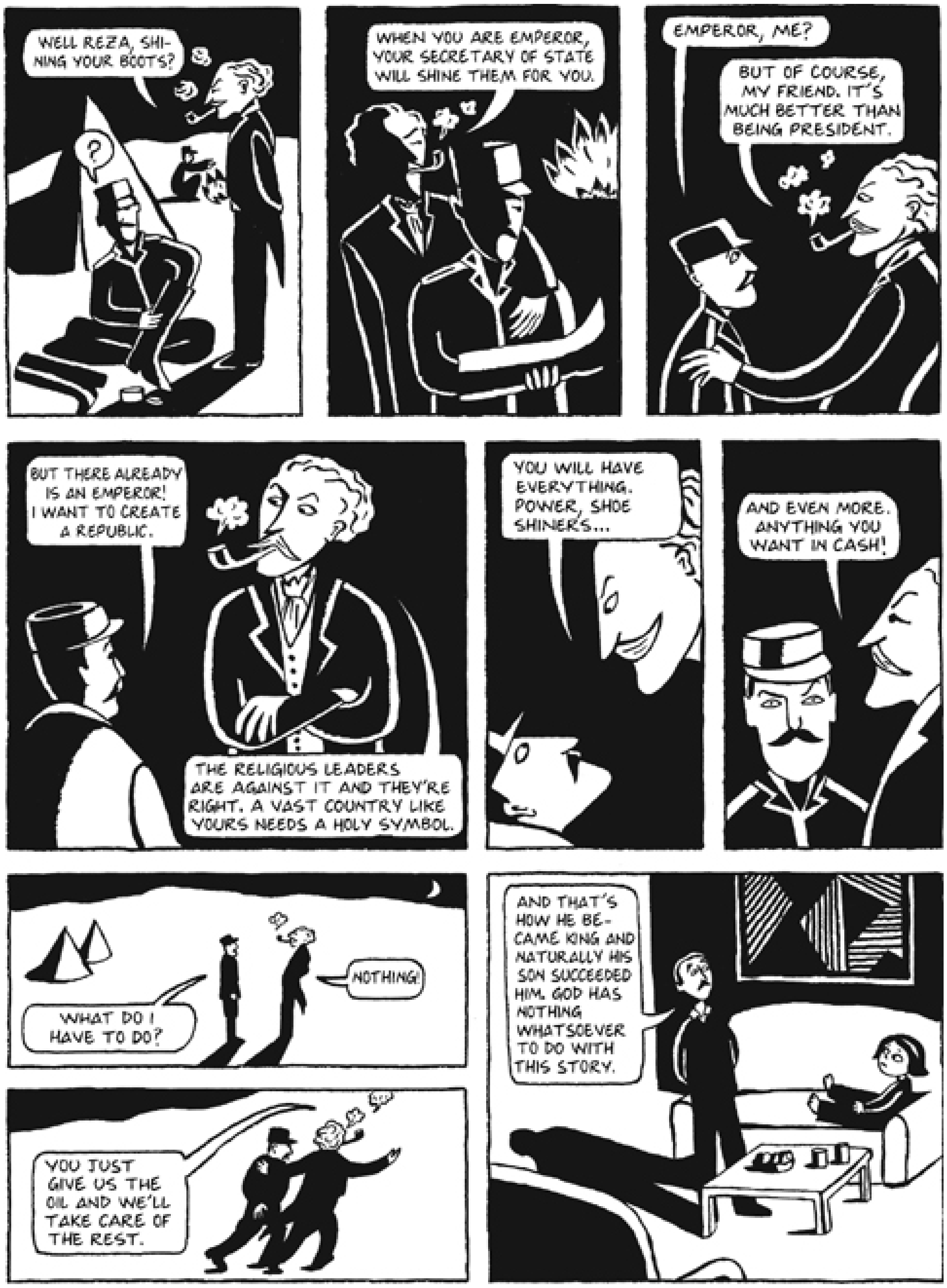

WHERE?
TO DEMONSTRATE ON THE STREET! I AM SICK AND TIRED OF DOING IT IN THE GARDEN.
IT IS VERY DANGEROUS. THEY SHOOT PEOPLE!
FOR A REVOLUTION TO SUCCEED, THE ENTIRE POPULATION MUST SUPPORT IT.
YOU CAN PARTICIPATE LATER ON.
SURE, SURE! WHEN IT'S ALL OVER.
MOM, PLEASE.
OH NO!
COME ON, YOU'RE GOING TO BED NOW.
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PL...
GOD, WHERE ARE YOU?
THAT NIGHT HE DIDN'T COME.

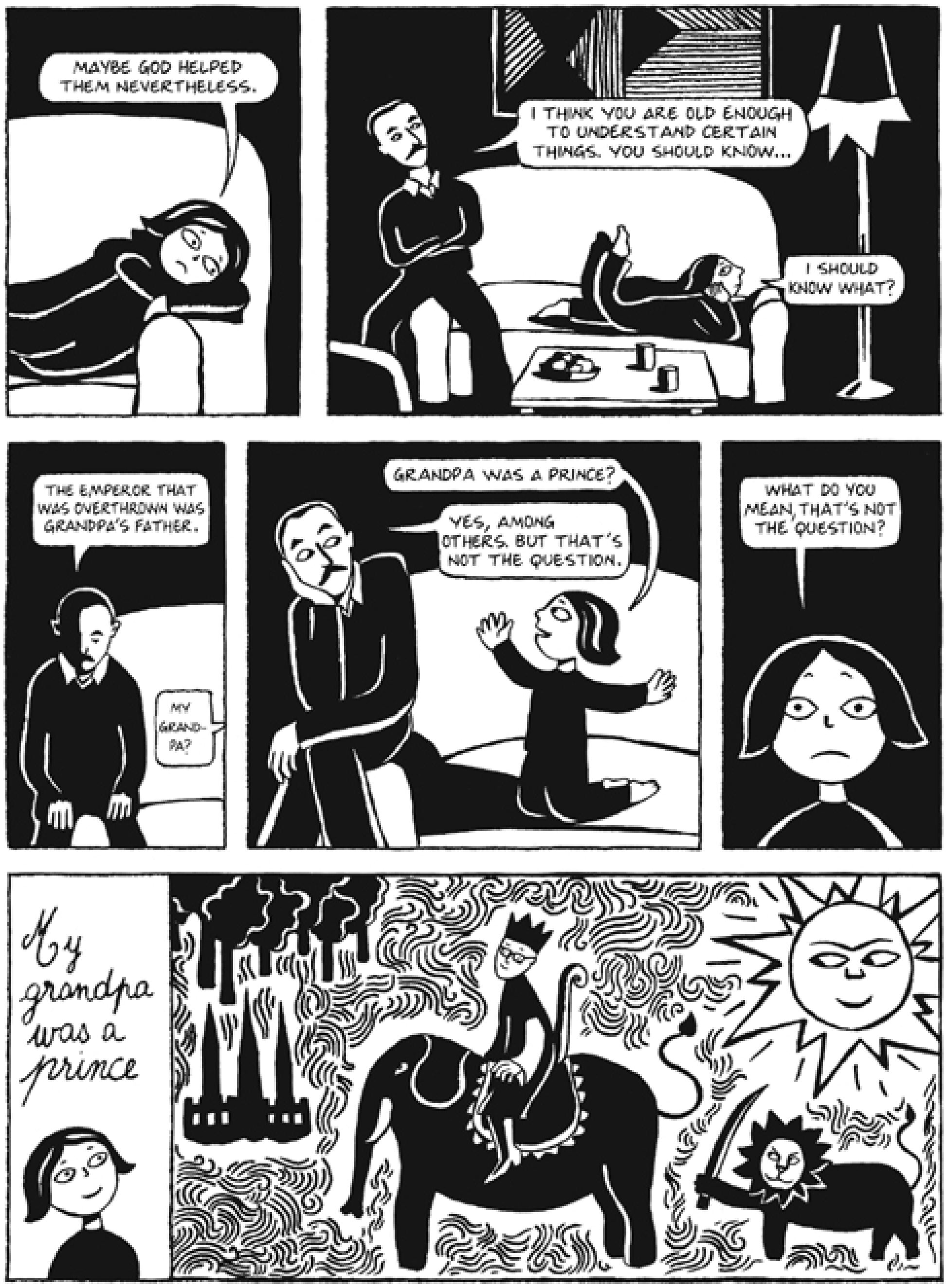
# THE WATER CELL

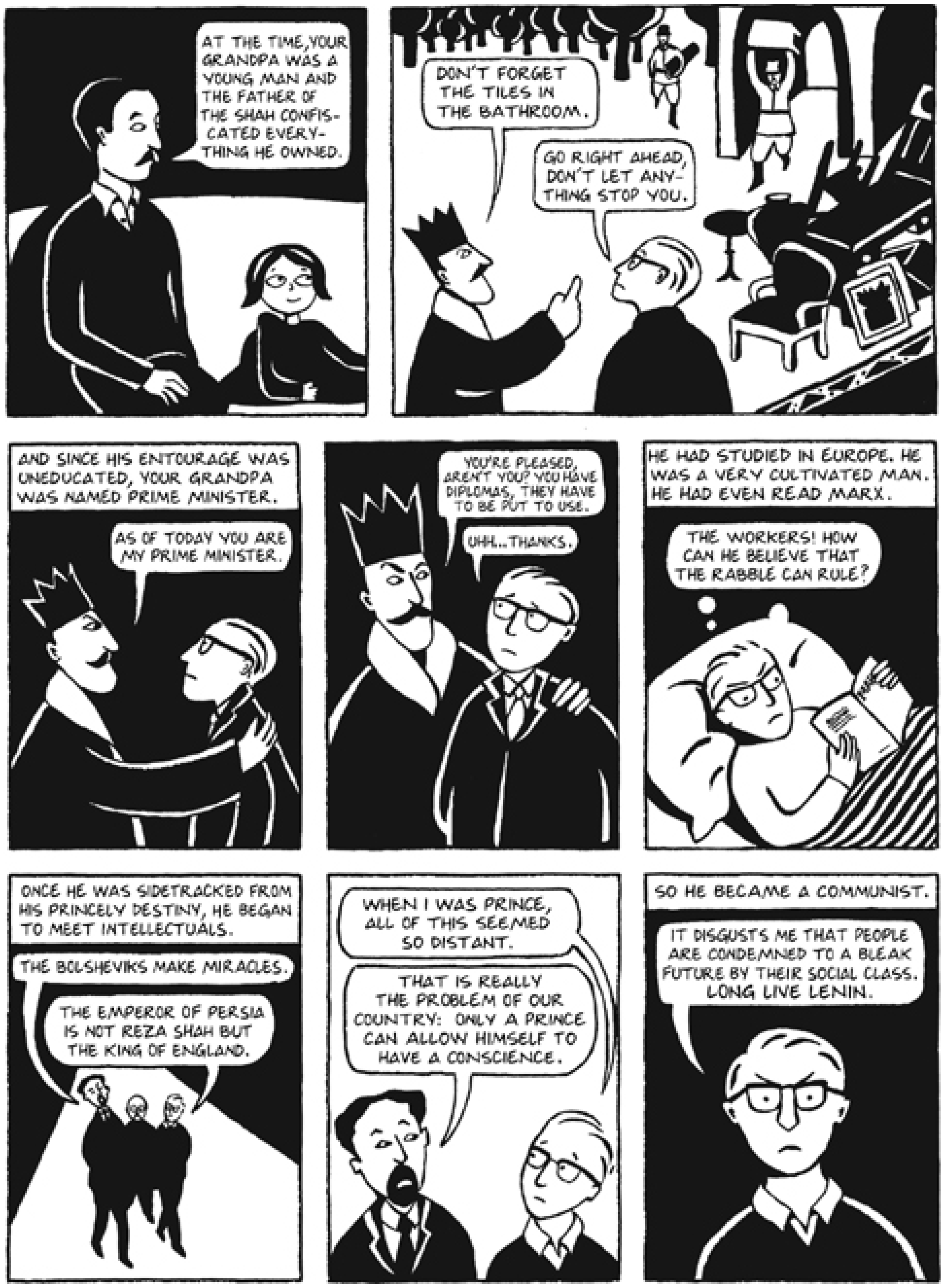

MY PARENTS DEMONSTRATED EVERY DAY.
DOWN WITH THE KING!
THINGS STARTED TO DEGENERATE. THE ARMY SHOT AT THEM.
AND THEY THREW STONES AT THE ARMY.
AFTER MARCHING AND THROWING STONES ALL DAY, BY EVENING THEY HAD ACHES ALL OVER, EVEN IN THEIR HEADS.
HEY MOM, DAD, LET'S PLAY MONOPOLY.
DARLING, WE ARE TIRED.
NOW IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME.
MONOPOLY! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HA! HA!
IT IS NEVER THE RIGHT TIME!

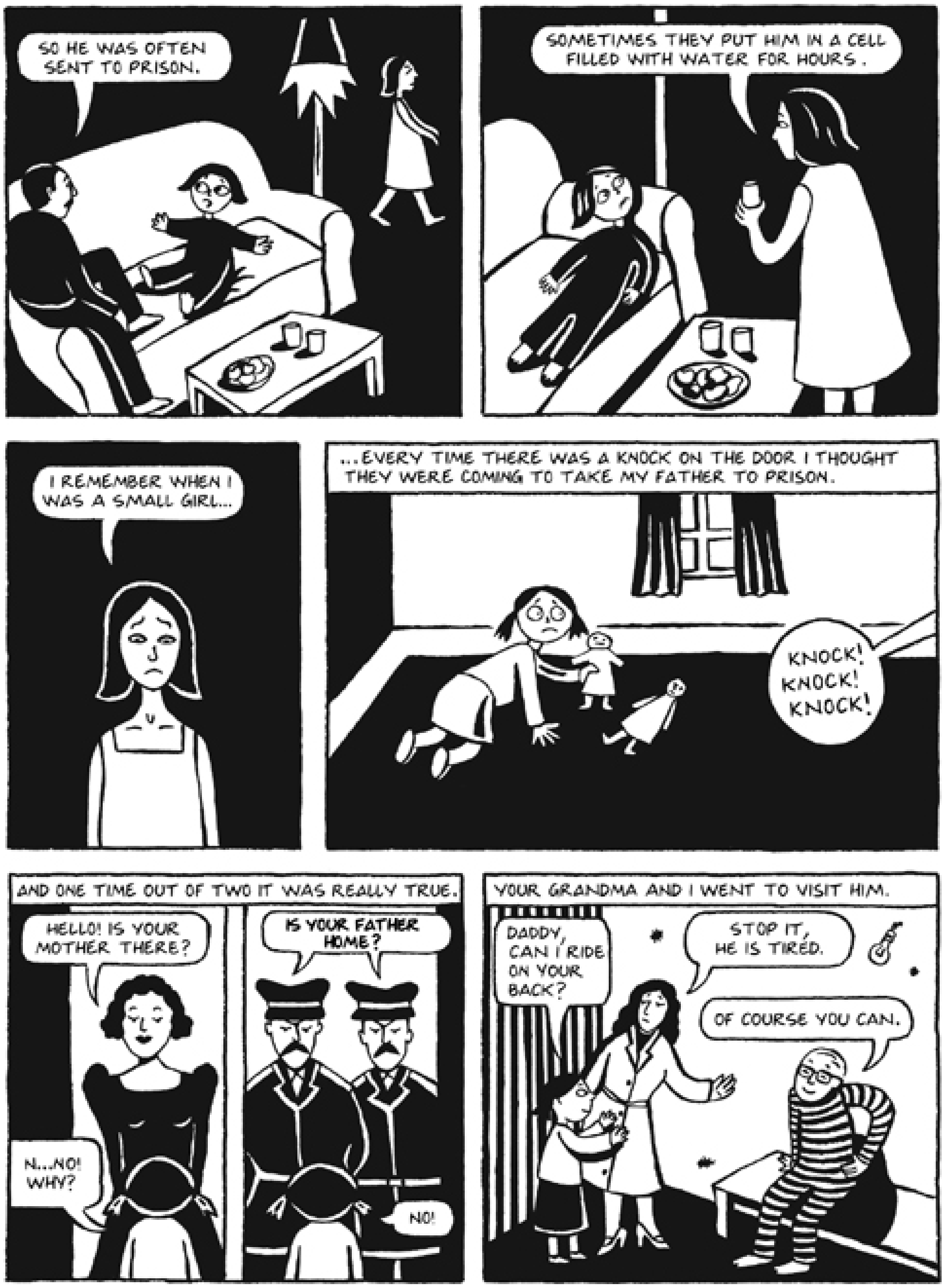

AS FOR ME, I LOVE THE KING, HE WAS CHOSEN BY GOD.
WHO TOLD YOU THAT?
MY TEACHER AND GOD HIMSELF.
COME SIT ON MY LAP. I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU.
GOOD, EXPLAIN EVERYTHING. I'M GOING TO BED.
GOD DID NOT CHOOSE THE KING.
HE DID SO! IT'S WRITTEN ON THE FIRST PAGE OF OUR SCHOOLBOOK.
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.
THE TRUTH IS THAT 50 YEARS AGO THE FATHER OF THE SHAH, WHO WAS A SOLDIER, ORGANIZED A PUTSCH TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR AND INSTALL A REPUBLIC.
IF IT IS GOD'S WILL, WE WILL REACH THE CAPITAL IN 19 DAYS.
GOD IS WITH US REZA, GOD IS WITH US.
AND EVEN IF HE ISN'T, WHAT CAN STOP US?

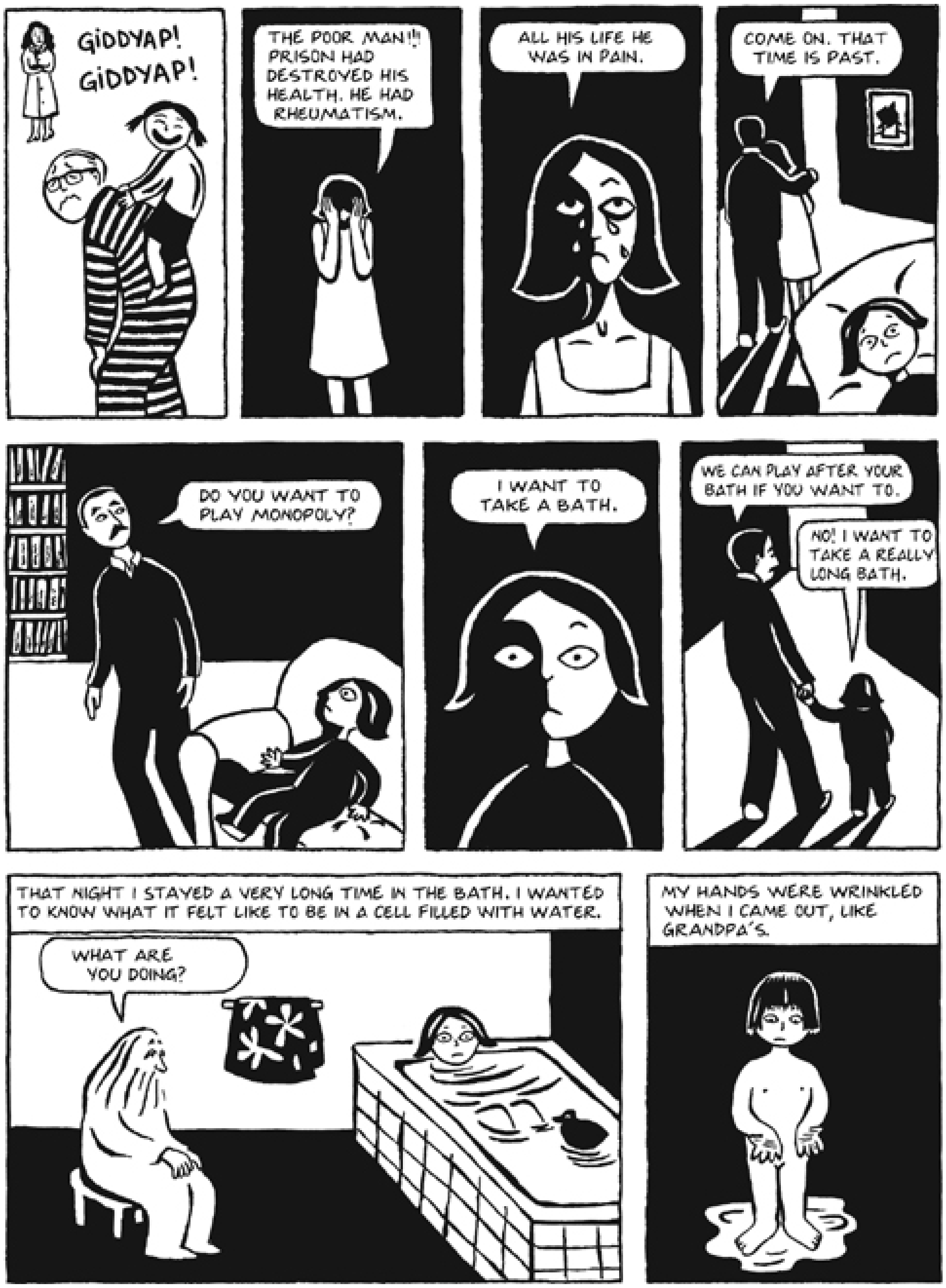

AT THE TIME THE REPUBLICAN IDEAL WAS POPULAR IN THE REGION BUT EVERYBODY INTERPRETED IT IN HIS OWN WAY.
GANDHI IN INDIA
THE HINDUS AND THE MUSLIMS MUST MAKE PEACE TO OVERTHROW THE BRITISH.
ATATURK IN TURKEY
WE, THE TURKS, ARE SECULAR WESTERNERS. FOR PROOF, LOOK AT MY GREEN EYES.
SO THE FATHER OF THE SHAH WANTED TO DO THE SAME.
BUT HE WASN'T EDUCATED LIKE GANDHI, WHO WAS A LAWYER...
...NOR WAS HE A LEADER OF MEN LIKE ATATURK, WHO WAS A GENERAL.
HE WAS AN ILLITERATE LOW-RANKING OFFICER.
A BLESSING FOR THE VERY INFLUENTIAL BRITISH WHO SOON LEARNED OF HIS PROJECTS.
THE COUNTRY IS RICH!
AND THE BOLSHEVIKS ARE NEAR.
WHAT'S THAT SOLDIER'S NAME AGAIN?
REZA! WE SHOULD GO MEET HIM.
IMMEDIATELY! PERSIA IS FULL OF OIL!

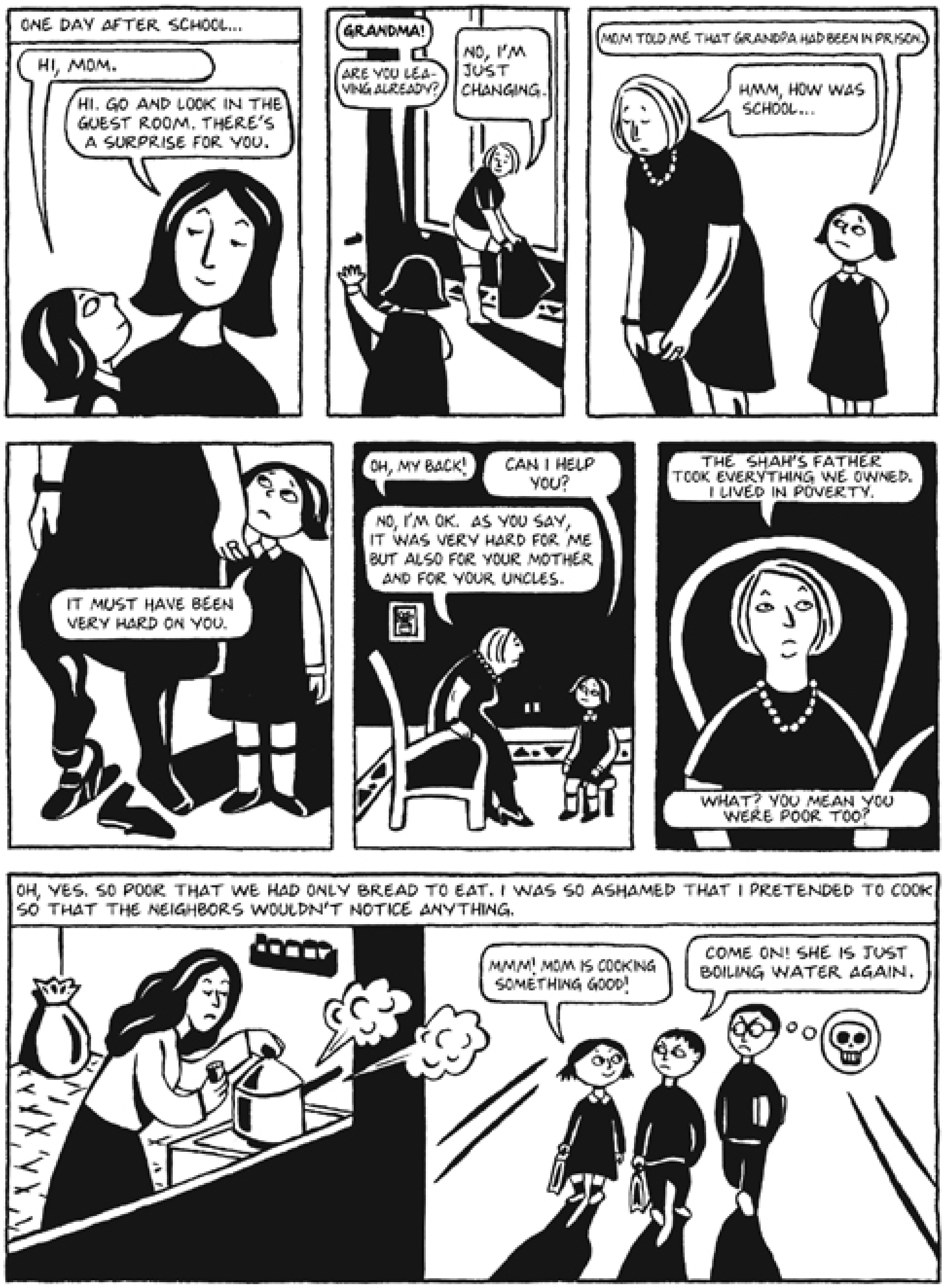

WELL REZA, SHINING YOUR BOOTS?
?
WHEN YOU ARE EMPEROR, YOUR SECRETARY OF STATE WILL SHINE THEM FOR YOU.
EMPEROR, ME?
BUT OF COURSE, MY FRIEND. IT'S MUCH BETTER THAN BEING PRESIDENT.
BUT THERE ALREADY IS AN EMPEROR! I WANT TO CREATE A REPUBLIC.
THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE AGAINST IT AND THEY'RE RIGHT. A VAST COUNTRY LIKE YOURS NEEDS A HOLY SYMBOL.
YOU WILL HAVE EVERYTHING. POWER, SHOE SHINERS...
AND EVEN MORE. ANYTHING YOU WANT IN CASH!
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?
NOTHING!
YOU JUST GIVE US THE OIL AND WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
AND THAT'S HOW HE BECAME KING AND NATURALLY HIS SON SUCCEEDED HIM. GOD HAS NOTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH THIS STORY.

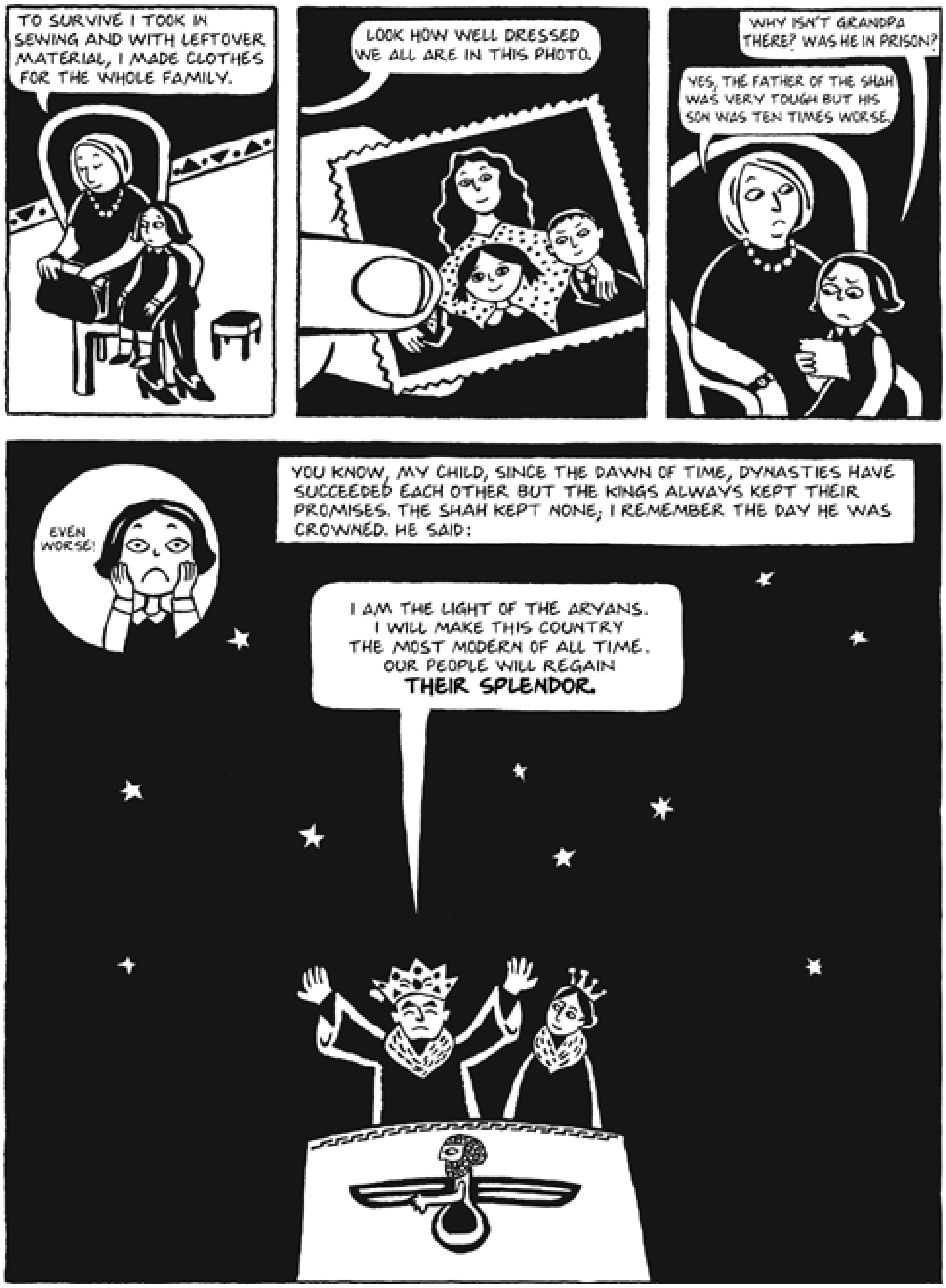

MAYBE GOD HELPED THEM NEVERTHELESS.
I THINK YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND CERTAIN THINGS. YOU SHOULD KNOW...
I SHOULD KNOW WHAT?
THE EMPEROR THAT WAS OVERTHROWN WAS GRANDPA'S FATHER.
MY GRANDPA?
GRANDPA WAS A PRINCE?
YES, AMONG OTHERS. BUT THAT'S NOT THE QUESTION.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THAT'S NOT THE QUESTION?
My grandpa was a prince


AT THE TIME, YOUR GRANDPA WAS A YOUNG MAN AND THE FATHER OF THE SHAH CONFISCATED EVERYTHING HE OWNED.
DON'T FORGET THE TILES IN THE BATHROOM.
GO RIGHT AHEAD, DON'T LET ANYTHING STOP YOU.
AND SINCE HIS ENTOURAGE WAS UNEDUCATED, YOUR GRANDPA WAS NAMED PRIME MINISTER.
AS OF TODAY YOU ARE MY PRIME MINISTER.
YOU'RE PLEASED, AREN'T YOU? YOU HAVE DIPLOMAS, THEY HAVE TO BE PUT TO USE.
UHH...THANKS.
HE HAD STUDIED IN EUROPE. HE WAS A VERY CULTIVATED MAN. HE HAD EVEN READ MARX.
THE WORKERS! HOW CAN HE BELIEVE THAT THE RABBLE CAN RULE?
ONCE HE WAS SIDETRACKED FROM HIS PRINCELY DESTINY, HE BEGAN TO MEET INTELLECTUALS.
THE BOLSHEVIKS MAKE MIRACLES.
THE EMPEROR OF PERSIA IS NOT REZA SHAH BUT THE KING OF ENGLAND.
WHEN I WAS PRINCE, ALL OF THIS SEEMED SO DISTANT.
THAT IS REALLY THE PROBLEM OF OUR COUNTRY: ONLY A PRINCE CAN ALLOW HIMSELF TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE.
SO HE BECAME A COMMUNIST.
IT DISGUSTS ME THAT PEOPLE ARE CONDEMNED TO A BLEAK FUTURE BY THEIR SOCIAL CLASS. LONG LIVE LENIN.

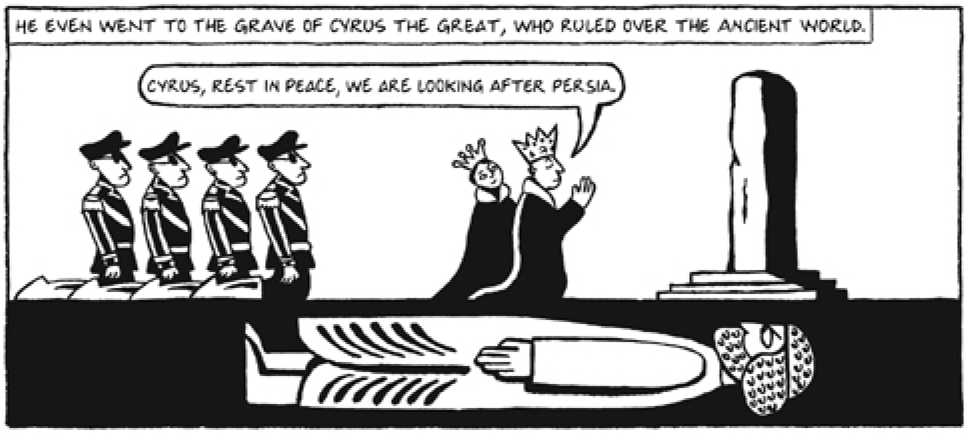

SO HE WAS OFTEN SENT TO PRISON.
SOMETIMES THEY PUT HIM IN A CELL FILLED WITH WATER FOR HOURS.
I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS A SMALL GIRL...
...EVERY TIME THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR I THOUGHT THEY WERE COMING TO TAKE MY FATHER TO PRISON.
KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!
AND ONE TIME OUT OF TWO IT WAS REALLY TRUE.
HELLO! IS YOUR MOTHER THERE?
N...NO! WHY?
IS YOUR FATHER HOME?
NO!
YOUR GRANDMA AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.
DADDY, CAN I RIDE ON YOUR BACK?
STOP IT, HE IS TIRED.
OF COURSE YOU CAN.


GIDDYAP! GIDDYAP!
THE POOR MAN!!! PRISON HAD DESTROYED HIS HEALTH. HE HAD RHEUMATISM.
ALL HIS LIFE HE WAS IN PAIN.
COME ON. THAT TIME IS PAST.
DO YOU WANT TO PLAY MONOPOLY?
I WANT TO TAKE A BATH.
WE CAN PLAY AFTER YOUR BATH IF YOU WANT TO.
NO! I WANT TO TAKE A REALLY LONG BATH.
THAT NIGHT I STAYED A VERY LONG TIME IN THE BATH. I WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE IN A CELL FILLED WITH WATER.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
MY HANDS WERE WRINKLED WHEN I CAME OUT, LIKE GRANDPA'S.

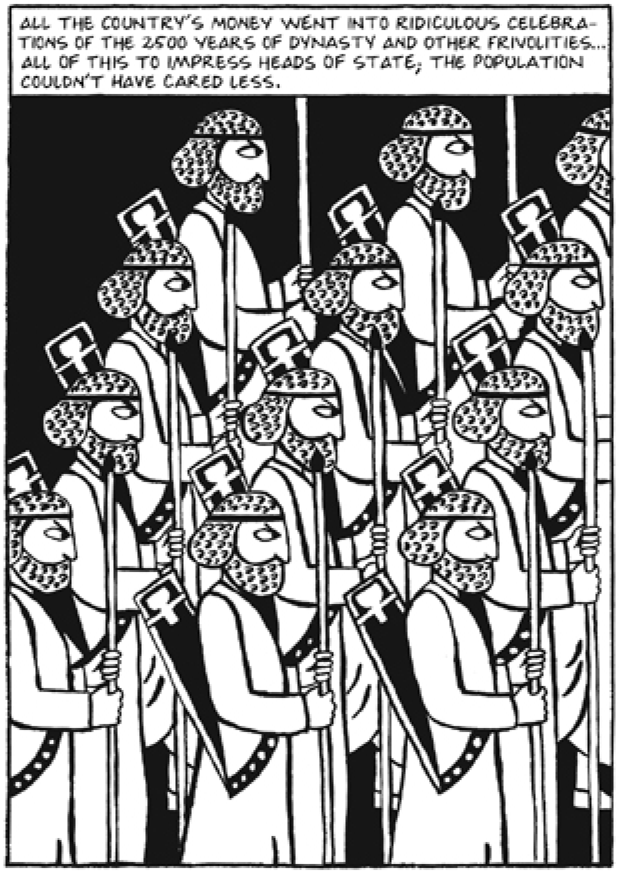

ONE DAY AFTER SCHOOL...
HI, MOM.
HI. GO AND LOOK IN THE GUEST ROOM. THERE'S A SURPRISE FOR YOU.
GRANDMA!
ARE YOU LEAVING ALREADY?
NO, I'M JUST CHANGING.
MOM TOLD ME THAT GRANDPA HAD BEEN IN PRISON.
HMM, HOW WAS SCHOOL...
IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY HARD ON YOU.
OH, MY BACK!
CAN I HELP YOU?
NO, I'M OK. AS YOU SAY, IT WAS VERY HARD FOR ME BUT ALSO FOR YOUR MOTHER AND FOR YOUR UNCLES.
THE SHAH'S FATHER TOOK EVERYTHING WE OWNED. I LIVED IN POVERTY.
WHAT? YOU MEAN YOU WERE POOR TOO?
OH, YES. SO POOR THAT WE HAD ONLY BREAD TO EAT. I WAS SO ASHAMED THAT I PRETENDED TO COOK SO THAT THE NEIGHBORS WOULDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING.
MMM! MOM IS COOKING SOMETHING GOOD!
COME ON! SHE IS JUST BOILING WATER AGAIN.

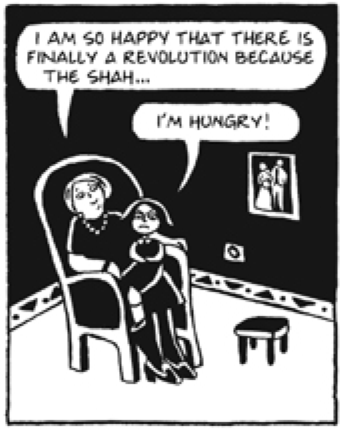

TO SURVIVE I TOOK IN SEWING AND WITH LEFTOVER MATERIAL, I MADE CLOTHES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.
LOOK HOW WELL DRESSED WE ALL ARE IN THIS PHOTO.
WHY ISN'T GRANDPA THERE? WAS HE IN PRISON?
YES, THE FATHER OF THE SHAH WAS VERY TOUGH BUT HIS SON WAS TEN TIMES WORSE.
YOU KNOW, MY CHILD, SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME, DYNASTIES HAVE SUCCEEDED EACH OTHER BUT THE KINGS ALWAYS KEPT THEIR PROMISES. THE SHAH KEPT NONE; I REMEMBER THE DAY HE WAS CROWNED. HE SAID:
EVEN WORSE!
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE ARYANS. I WILL MAKE THIS COUNTRY THE MOST MODERN OF ALL TIME. OUR PEOPLE WILL REGAIN **THEIR SPLENDOR.**

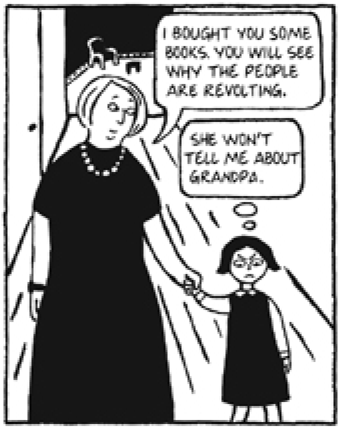
HE EVEN WENT TO THE GRAVE OF CYRUS THE GREAT, WHO RULED OVER THE ANCIENT WORLD.

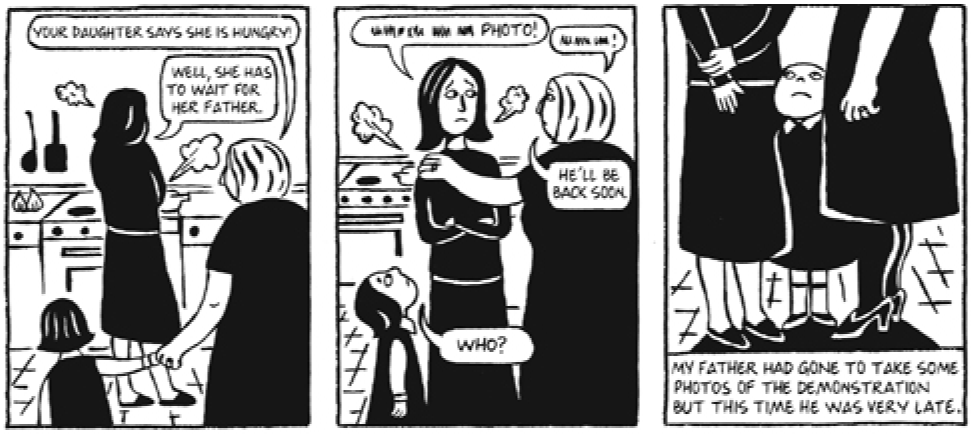

CYRUS, REST IN PEACE, WE ARE LOOKING AFTER PERSIA.

ALL THE COUNTRY'S MONEY WENT INTO RIDICULOUS CELEBRATIONS OF THE 2500 YEARS OF DYNASTY AND OTHER FRIVOLITIES... ALL OF THIS TO IMPRESS HEADS OF STATE; THE POPULATION COULDN'T HAVE CARED LESS.

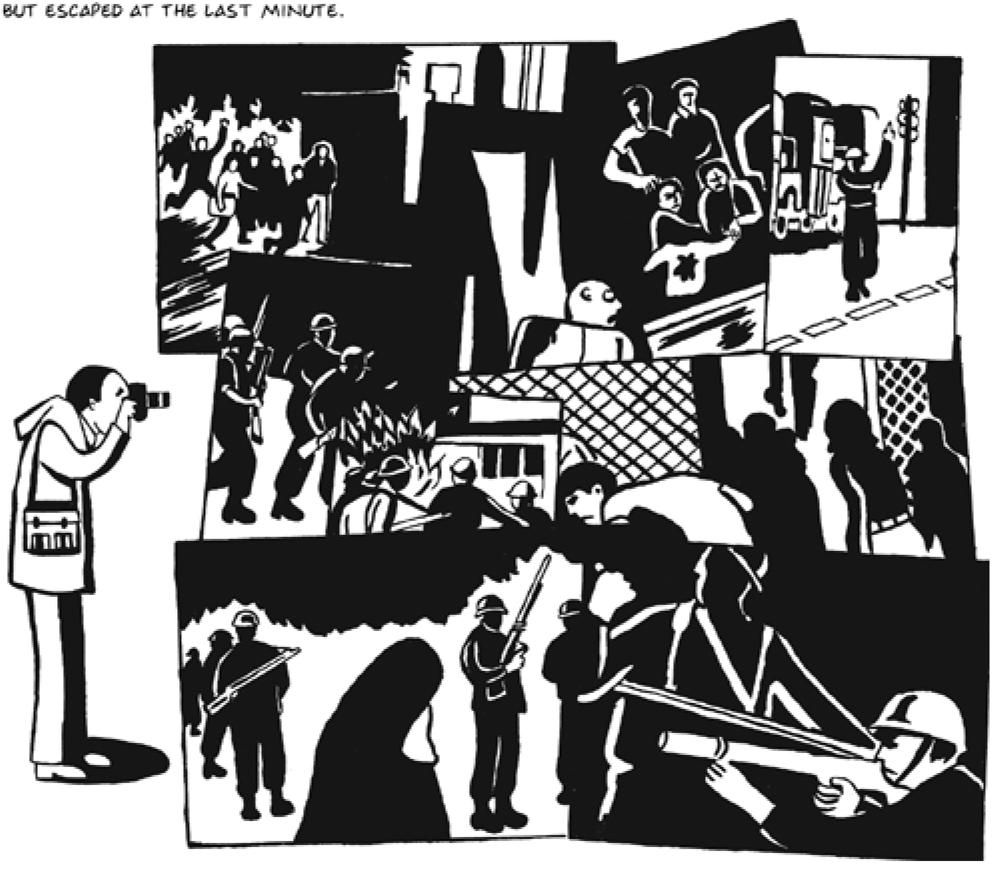


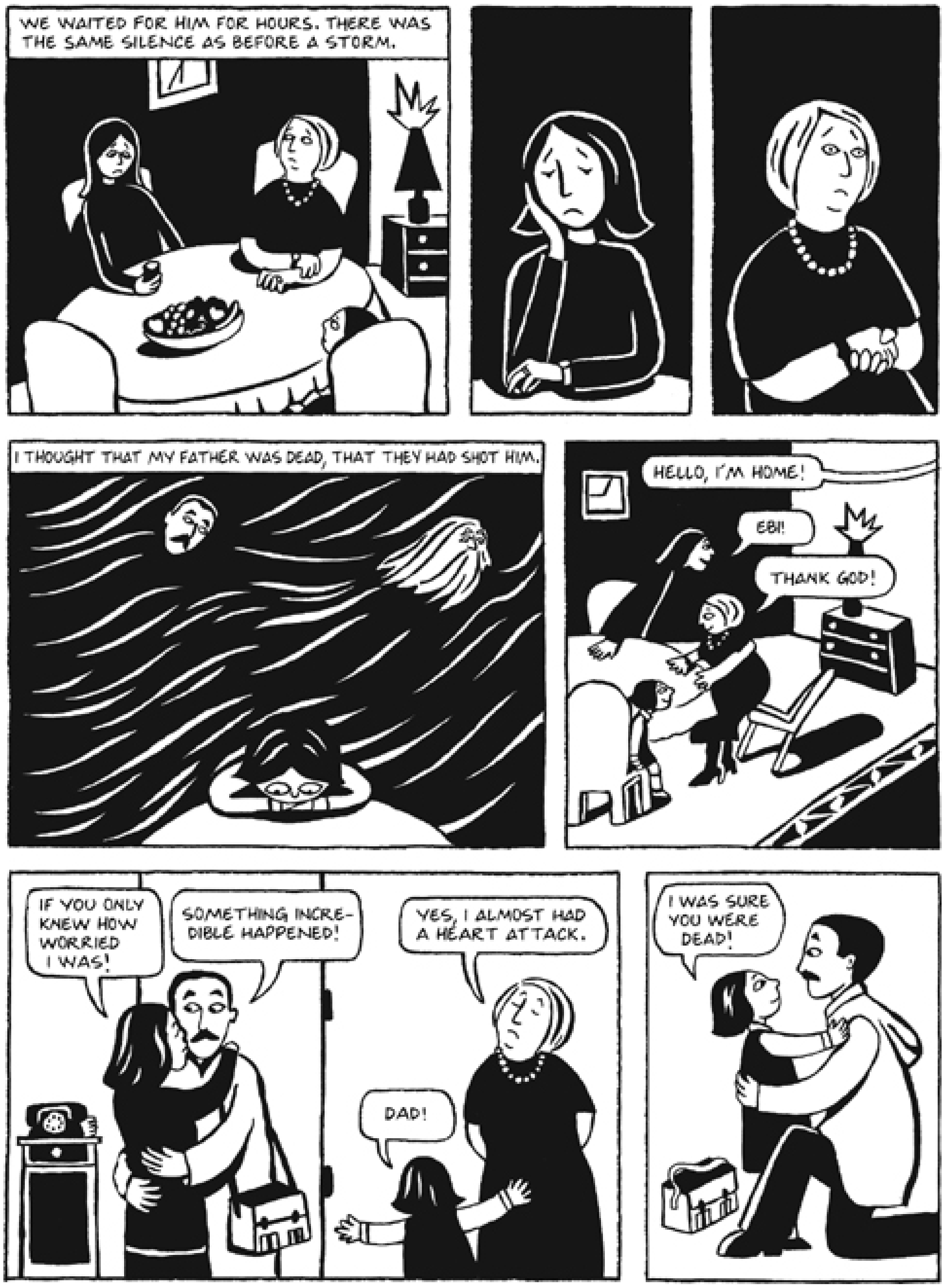

I AM SO HAPPY THAT THERE IS FINALLY A REVOLUTION BECAUSE THE SHAH...
I'M HUNGRY!

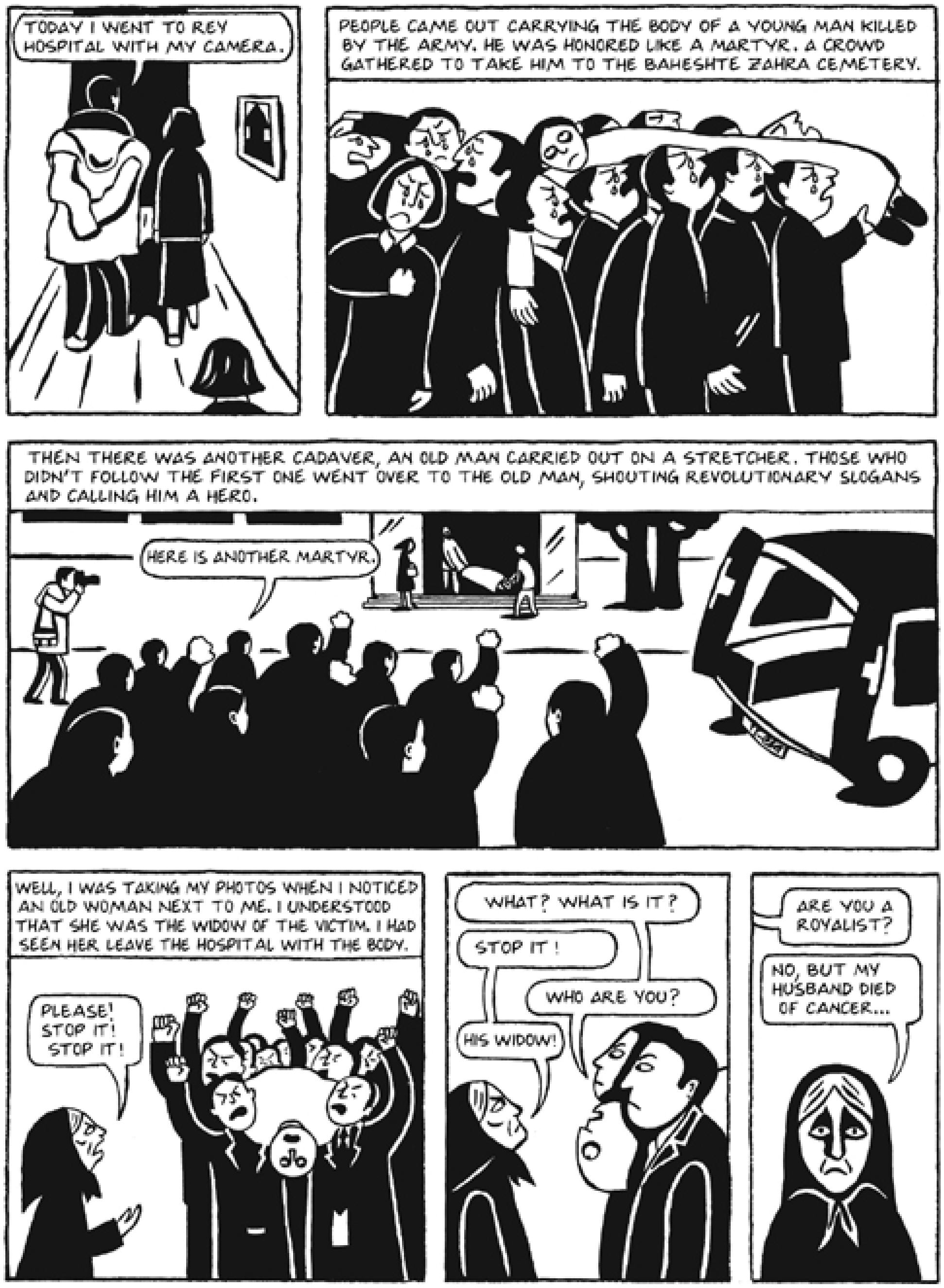

I BOUGHT YOU SOME BOOKS. YOU WILL SEE WHY THE PEOPLE ARE REVOLTING.
SHE WON'T TELL ME ABOUT GRANDPA.

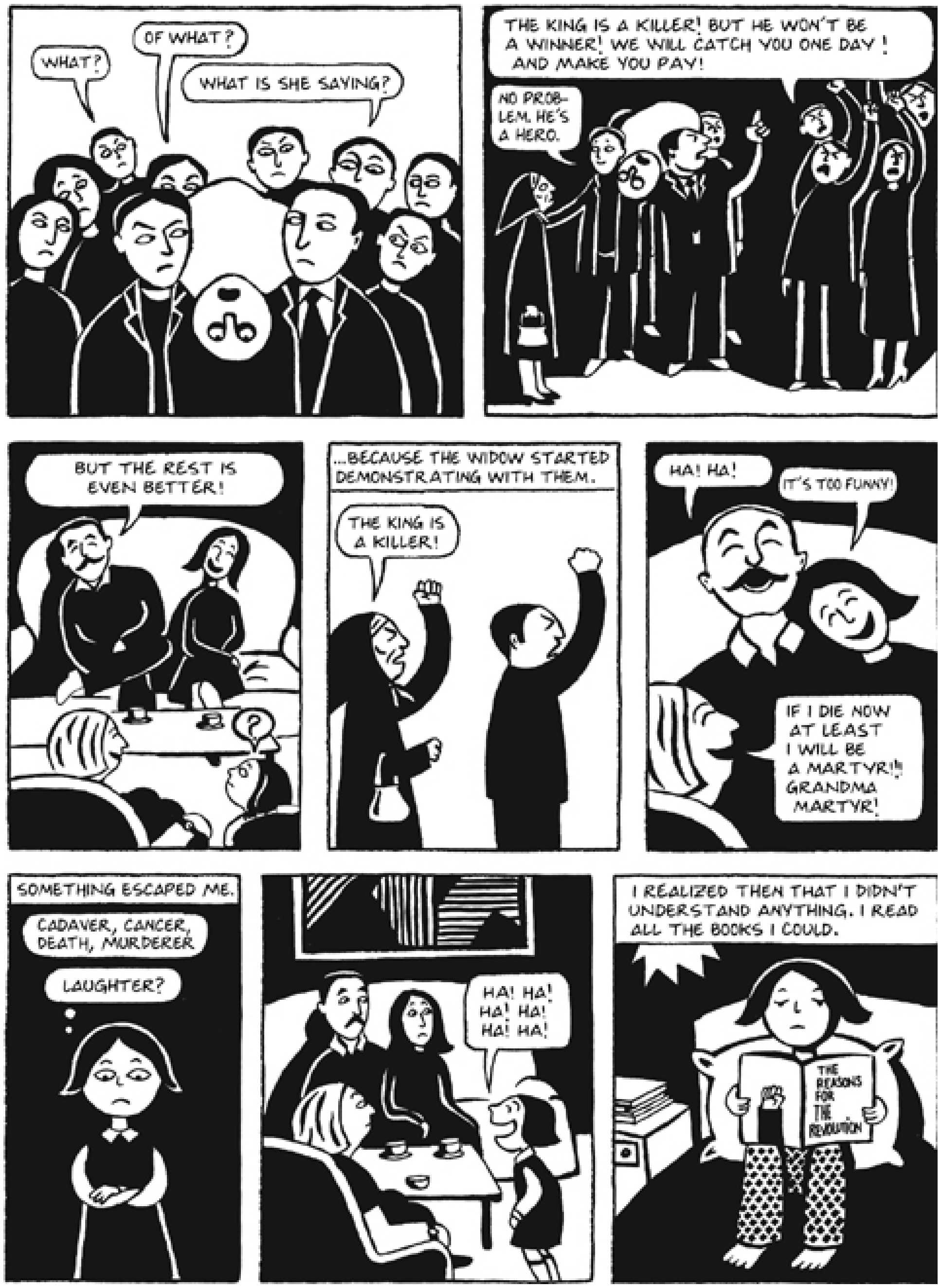

YOUR DAUGHTER SAYS SHE IS HUNGRY!
WELL, SHE HAS TO WAIT FOR HER FATHER.
PHOTO!
HE'LL BE BACK SOON.
WHO?
MY FATHER HAD GONE TO TAKE SOME PHOTOS OF THE DEMONSTRATION BUT THIS TIME HE WAS VERY LATE.

HE TOOK PHOTOS EVERY DAY. IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. HE HAD EVEN BEEN ARRESTED ONCE BUT ESCAPED AT THE LAST MINUTE.

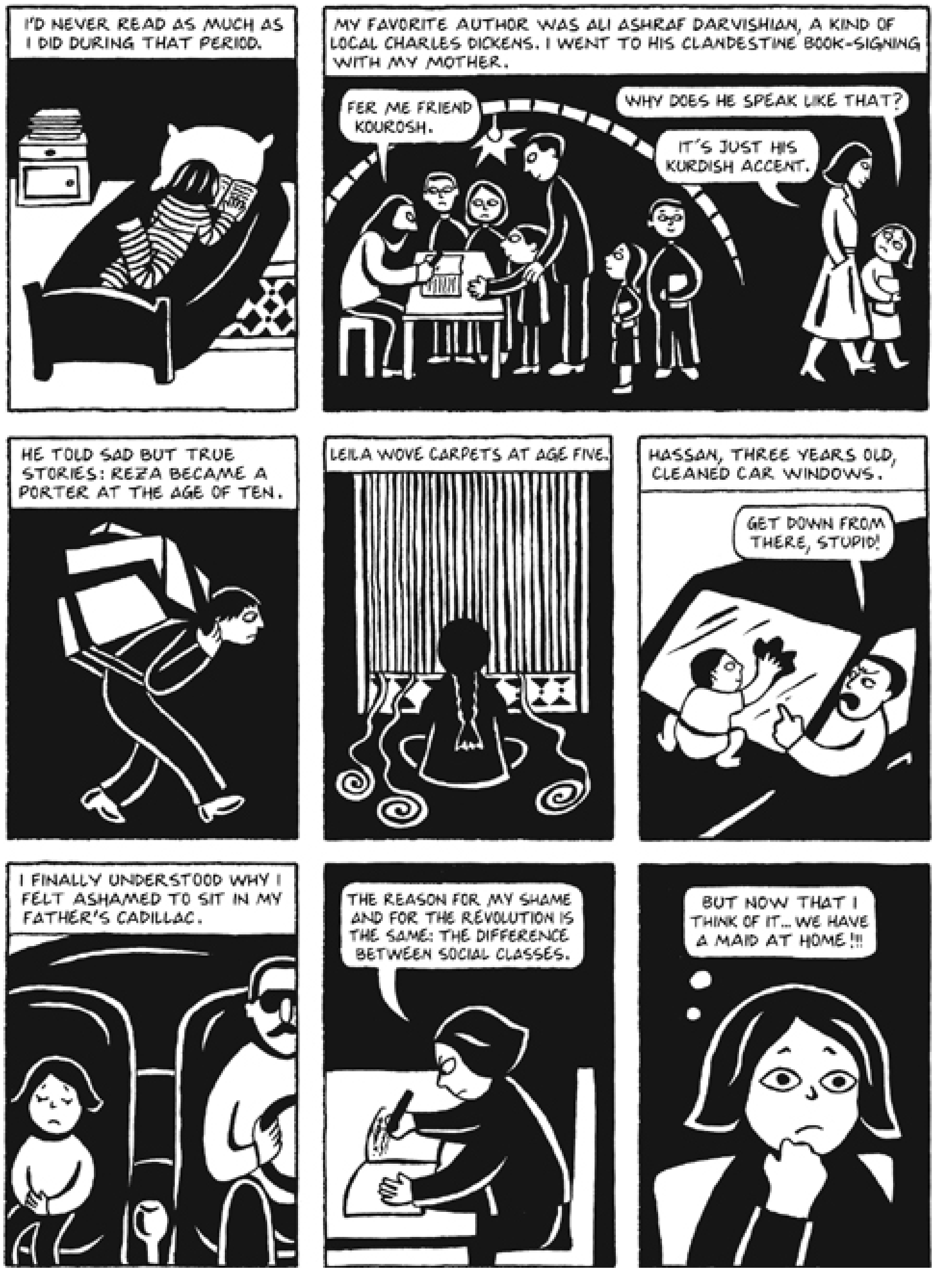


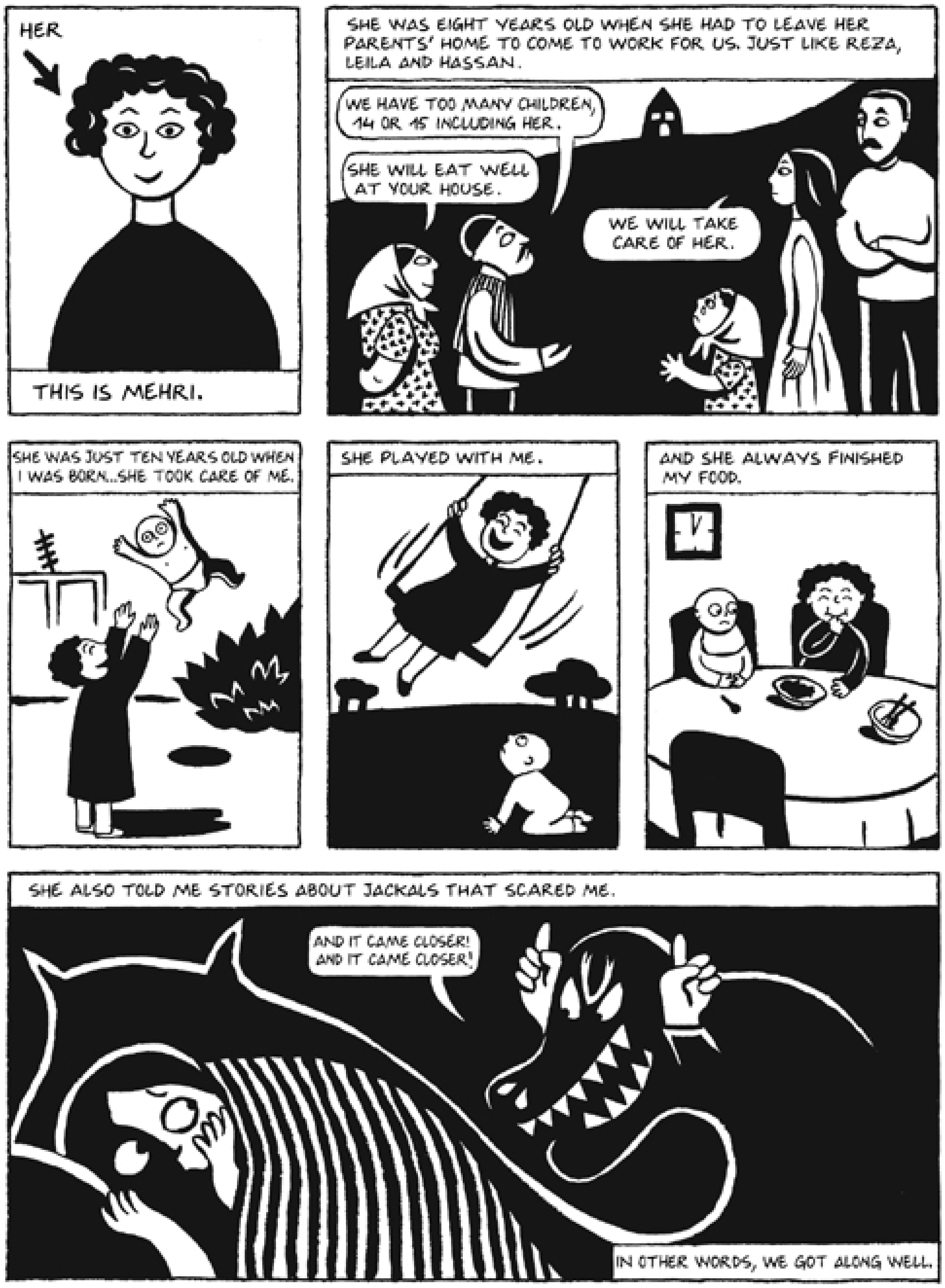

WE WAITED FOR HIM FOR HOURS. THERE WAS THE SAME SILENCE AS BEFORE A STORM.
I THOUGHT THAT MY FATHER WAS DEAD, THAT THEY HAD SHOT HIM.
HELLO, I'M HOME!
EBI!
THANK GOD!
IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW WORRIED I WAS!
SOMETHING INCREDIBLE HAPPENED!
YES, I ALMOST HAD A HEART ATTACK.
DAD!
I WAS SURE YOU WERE DEAD!

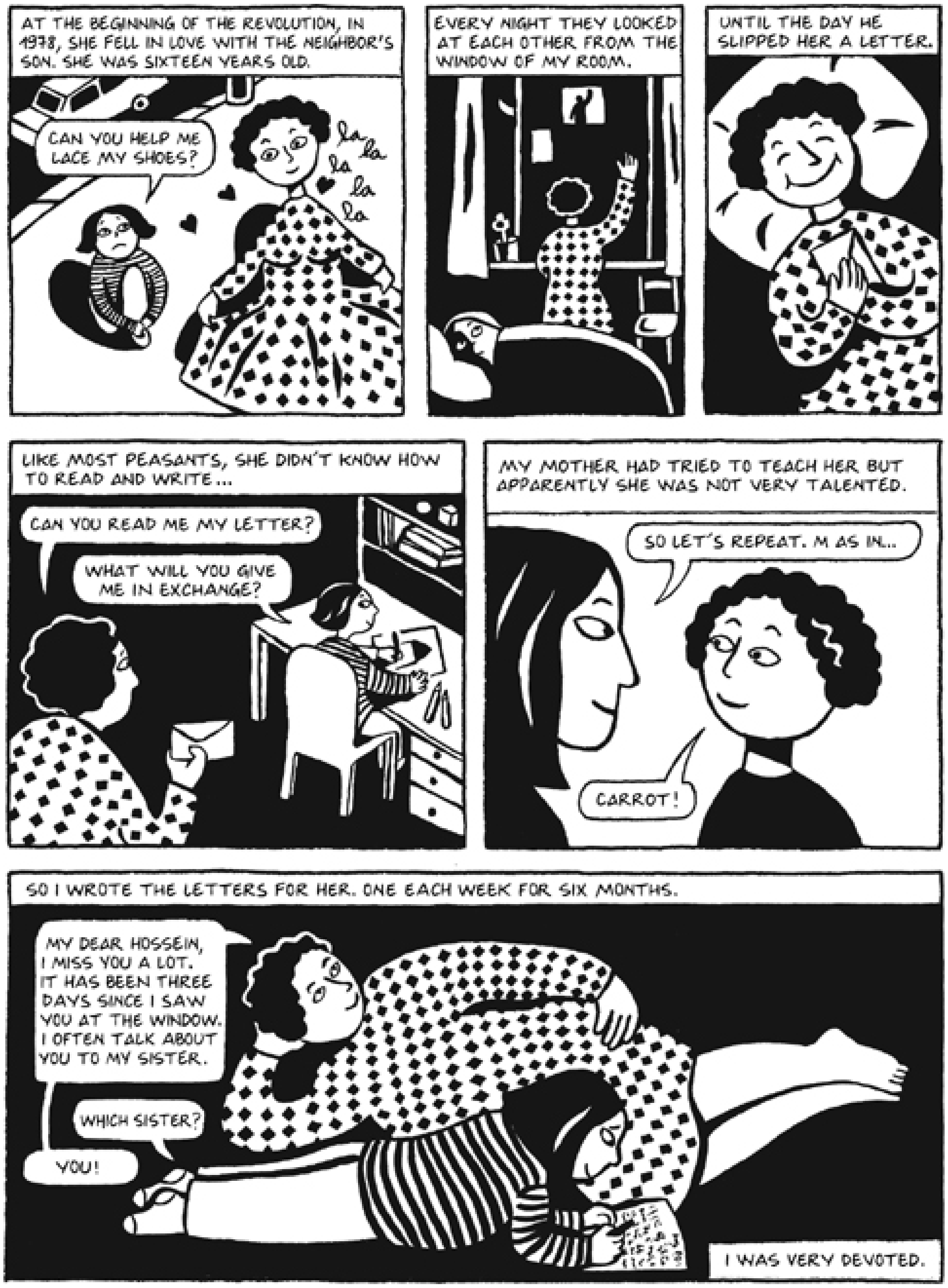

TODAY I WENT TO REY HOSPITAL WITH MY CAMERA.
PEOPLE CAME OUT CARRYING THE BODY OF A YOUNG MAN KILLED BY THE ARMY. HE WAS HONORED LIKE A MARTYR. A CROWD GATHERED TO TAKE HIM TO THE BAHESHTE ZAHRA CEMETERY.
THEN THERE WAS ANOTHER CADAVER, AN OLD MAN CARRIED OUT ON A STRETCHER. THOSE WHO DIDN'T FOLLOW THE FIRST ONE WENT OVER TO THE OLD MAN, SHOUTING REVOLUTIONARY SLOGANS AND CALLING HIM A HERO.
HERE IS ANOTHER MARTYR.
WELL, I WAS TAKING MY PHOTOS WHEN I NOTICED AN OLD WOMAN NEXT TO ME. I UNDERSTOOD THAT SHE WAS THE WIDOW OF THE VICTIM. I HAD SEEN HER LEAVE THE HOSPITAL WITH THE BODY.
PLEASE! STOP IT! STOP IT!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
STOP IT!
WHO ARE YOU?
HIS WIDOW!
ARE YOU A ROYALIST?
NO, BUT MY HUSBAND DIED OF CANCER...

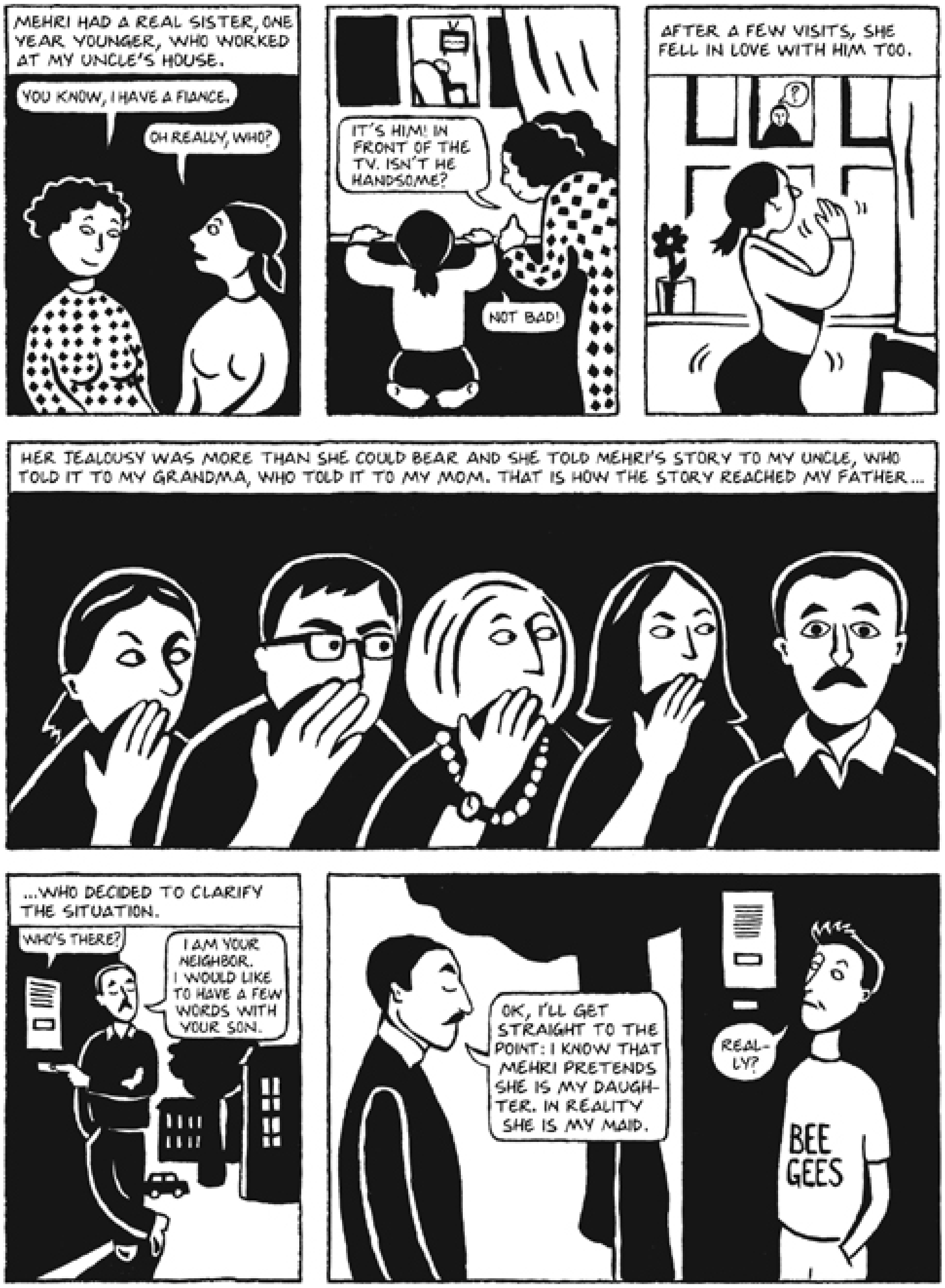

WHAT?
OF WHAT?
WHAT IS SHE SAYING?
THE KING IS A KILLER! BUT HE WON'T BE A WINNER! WE WILL CATCH YOU ONE DAY! AND MAKE YOU PAY!
NO PROBLEM. HE'S A HERO.
BUT THE REST IS EVEN BETTER!
...BECAUSE THE WIDOW STARTED DEMONSTRATING WITH THEM.
THE KING IS A KILLER!
HA! HA!
IT'S TOO FUNNY!
IF I DIE NOW AT LEAST I WILL BE A MARTYR!!! GRANDMA MARTYR!
SOMETHING ESCAPED ME.
CADAVER, CANCER, DEATH, MURDERER
LAUGHTER?
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
I REALIZED THEN THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING. I READ ALL THE BOOKS I COULD.
THE REASONS FOR THE REVOLUTION

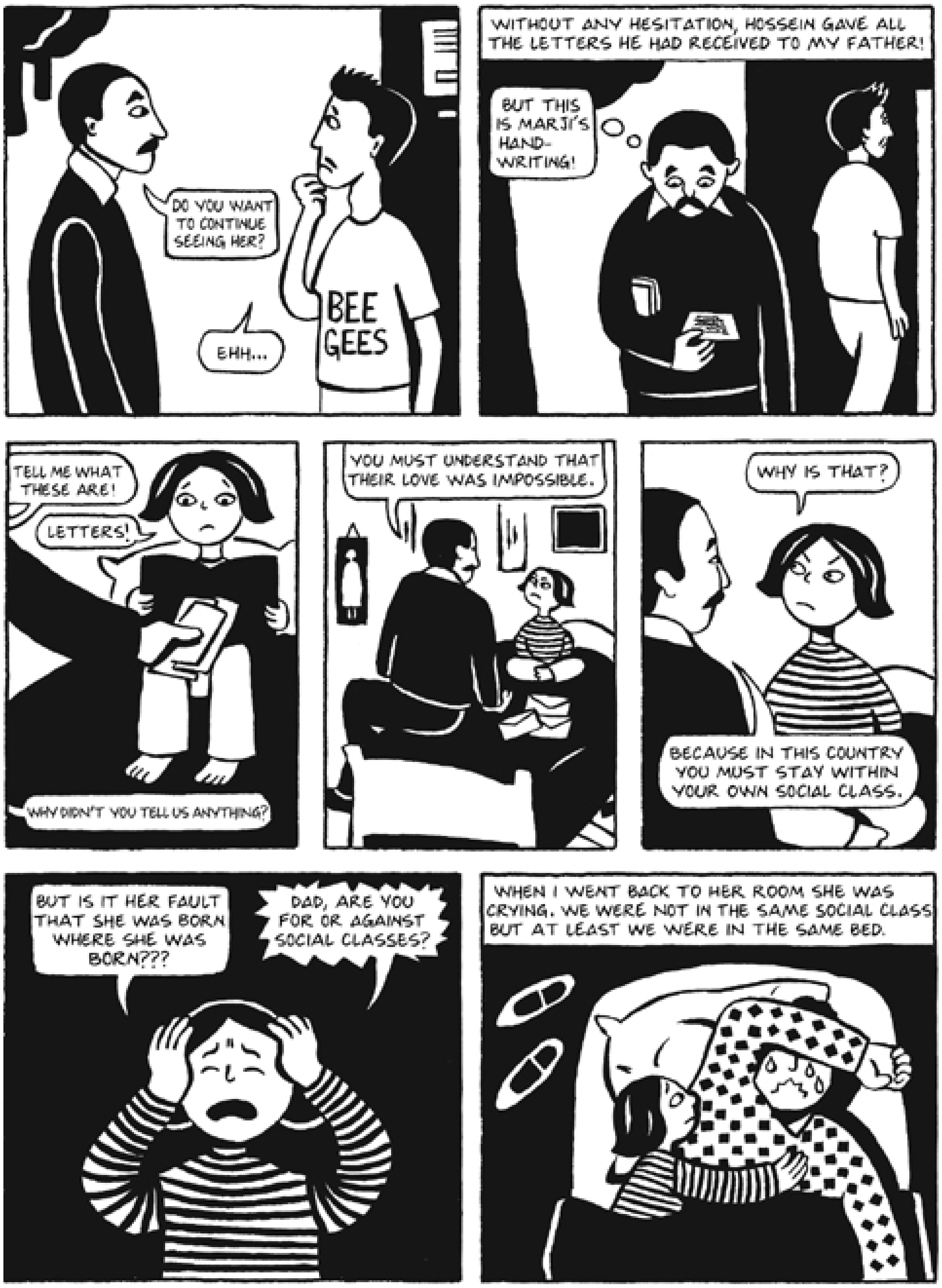
# THE LETTER

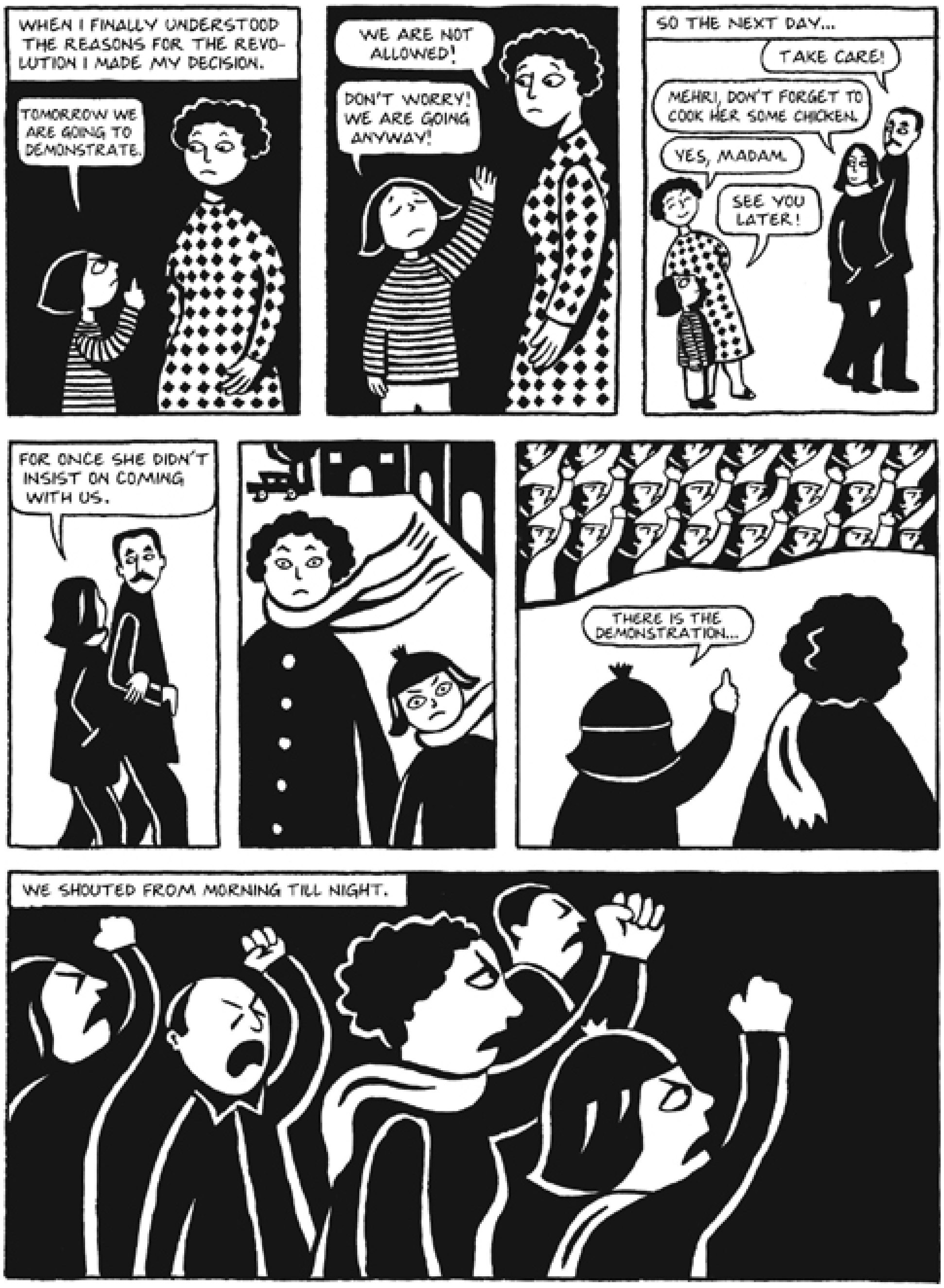

I'D NEVER READ AS MUCH AS I DID DURING THAT PERIOD.
MY FAVORITE AUTHOR WAS ALI ASHRAF DARVISHIAN, A KIND OF LOCAL CHARLES DICKENS. I WENT TO HIS CLANDESTINE BOOK-SIGNING WITH MY MOTHER.
FER ME FRIEND KOUROSH.
WHY DOES HE SPEAK LIKE THAT?
IT'S JUST HIS KURDISH ACCENT.
HE TOLD SAD BUT TRUE STORIES: REZA BECAME A PORTER AT THE AGE OF TEN.
LEILA WOVE CARPETS AT AGE FIVE.
HASSAN, THREE YEARS OLD, CLEANED CAR WINDOWS.
GET DOWN FROM THERE, STUPID!
I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHY I FELT ASHAMED TO SIT IN MY FATHER'S CADILLAC.
THE REASON FOR MY SHAME AND FOR THE REVOLUTION IS THE SAME: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES.
BUT NOW THAT I THINK OF IT... WE HAVE A MAID AT HOME!!!

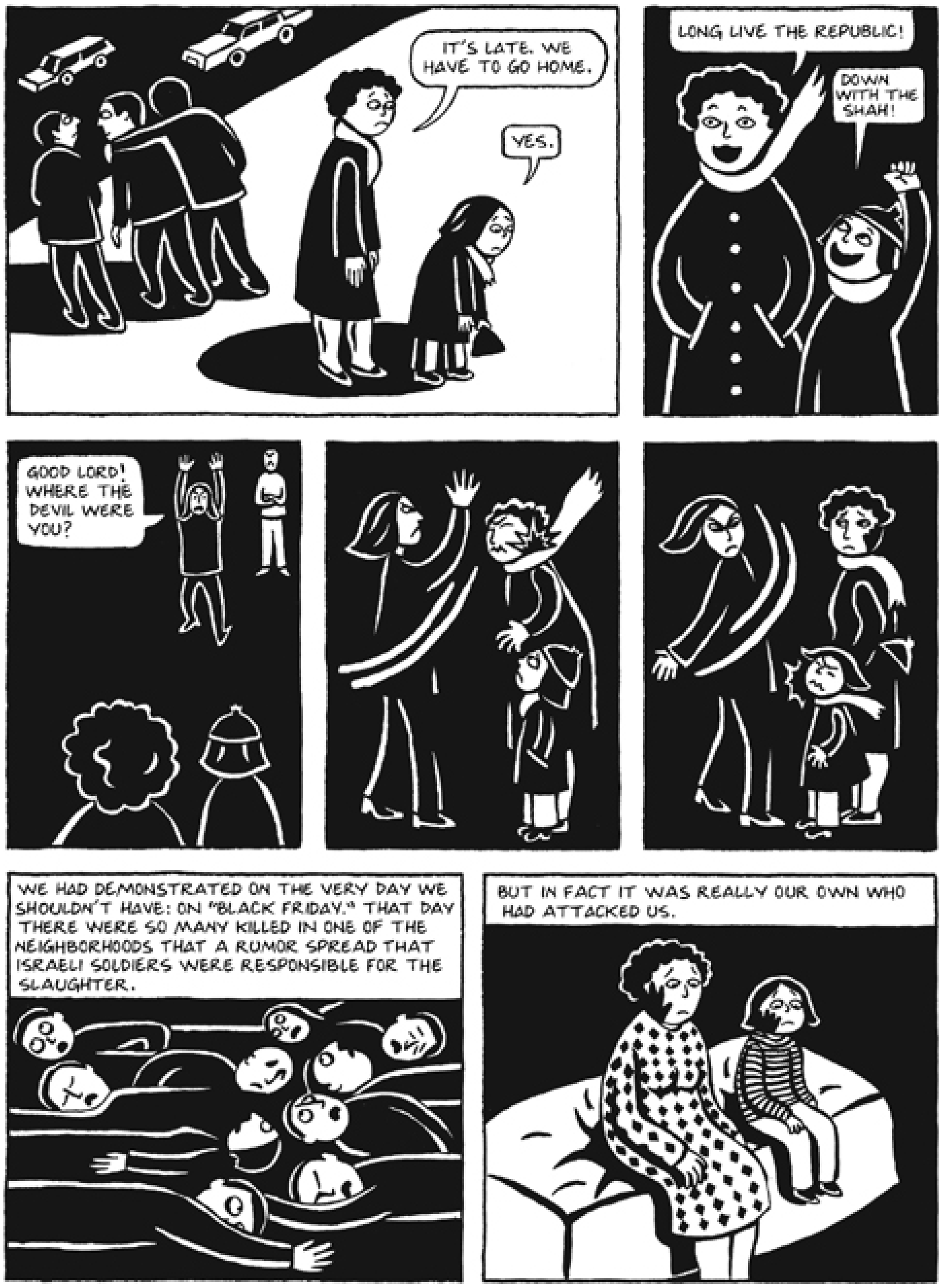

HER
THIS IS MEHRI.
SHE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN SHE HAD TO LEAVE HER PARENTS' HOME TO COME TO WORK FOR US. JUST LIKE REZA, LEILA AND HASSAN.
WE HAVE TOO MANY CHILDREN, 14 OR 15 INCLUDING HER.
SHE WILL EAT WELL AT YOUR HOUSE.
WE WILL TAKE CARE OF HER.
SHE WAS JUST TEN YEARS OLD WHEN I WAS BORN...SHE TOOK CARE OF ME.
SHE PLAYED WITH ME.
AND SHE ALWAYS FINISHED MY FOOD.
SHE ALSO TOLD ME STORIES ABOUT JACKALS THAT SCARED ME.
AND IT CAME CLOSER! AND IT CAME CLOSER!
IN OTHER WORDS, WE GOT ALONG WELL.


AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION, IN 1978, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NEIGHBOR'S SON. SHE WAS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD.
CAN YOU HELP ME LACE MY SHOES?
la la la la la
EVERY NIGHT THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER FROM THE WINDOW OF MY ROOM.
UNTIL THE DAY HE SLIPPED HER A LETTER.
LIKE MOST PEASANTS, SHE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO READ AND WRITE...
CAN YOU READ ME MY LETTER?
WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME IN EXCHANGE?
MY MOTHER HAD TRIED TO TEACH HER BUT APPARENTLY SHE WAS NOT VERY TALENTED.
SO LET'S REPEAT. M AS IN..
CARROT!
SO I WROTE THE LETTERS FOR HER. ONE EACH WEEK FOR SIX MONTHS.
MY DEAR HOSSEIN, I MISS YOU A LOT. IT HAS BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE I SAW YOU AT THE WINDOW. I OFTEN TALK ABOUT YOU TO MY SISTER.
WHICH SISTER?
YOU!
I WAS VERY DEVOTED.

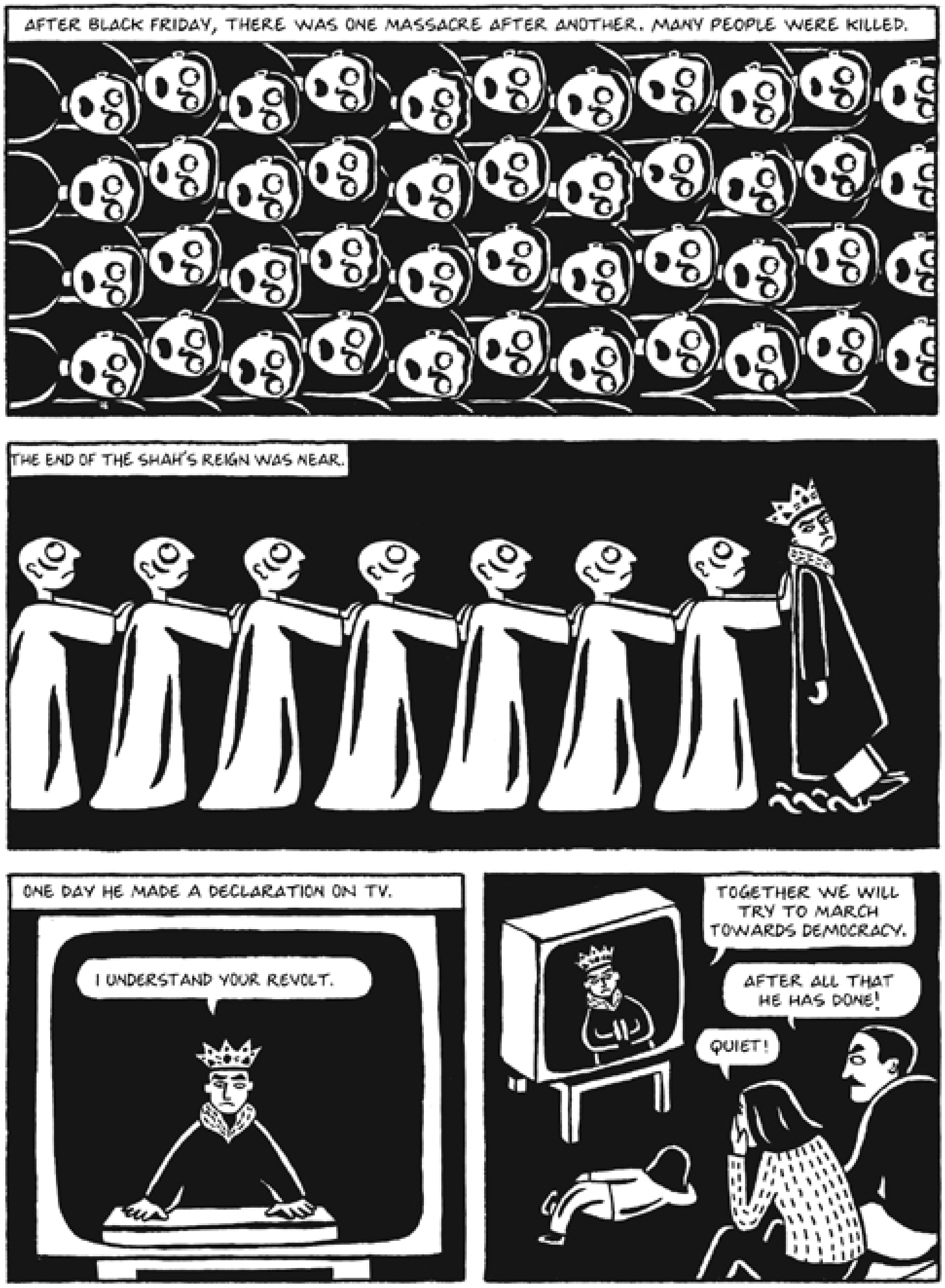

MEHRI HAD A REAL SISTER, ONE YEAR YOUNGER, WHO WORKED AT MY UNCLE'S HOUSE.
YOU KNOW, I HAVE A FIANCE.
OH REALLY, WHO?
IT'S HIM! IN FRONT OF THE TV. ISN'T HE HANDSOME?
NOT BAD!
AFTER A FEW VISITS, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM TOO.
?
HER JEALOUSY WAS MORE THAN SHE COULD BEAR AND SHE TOLD MEHRI'S STORY TO MY UNCLE, WHO TOLD IT TO MY GRANDMA, WHO TOLD IT TO MY MOM. THAT IS HOW THE STORY REACHED MY FATHER...
...WHO DECIDED TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION.
WHO'S THERE?
I AM YOUR NEIGHBOR. I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH YOUR SON.
OK, I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT: I KNOW THAT MEHRI PRETENDS SHE IS MY DAUGHTER. IN REALITY SHE IS MY MAID.
REALLY?
BEE GEES

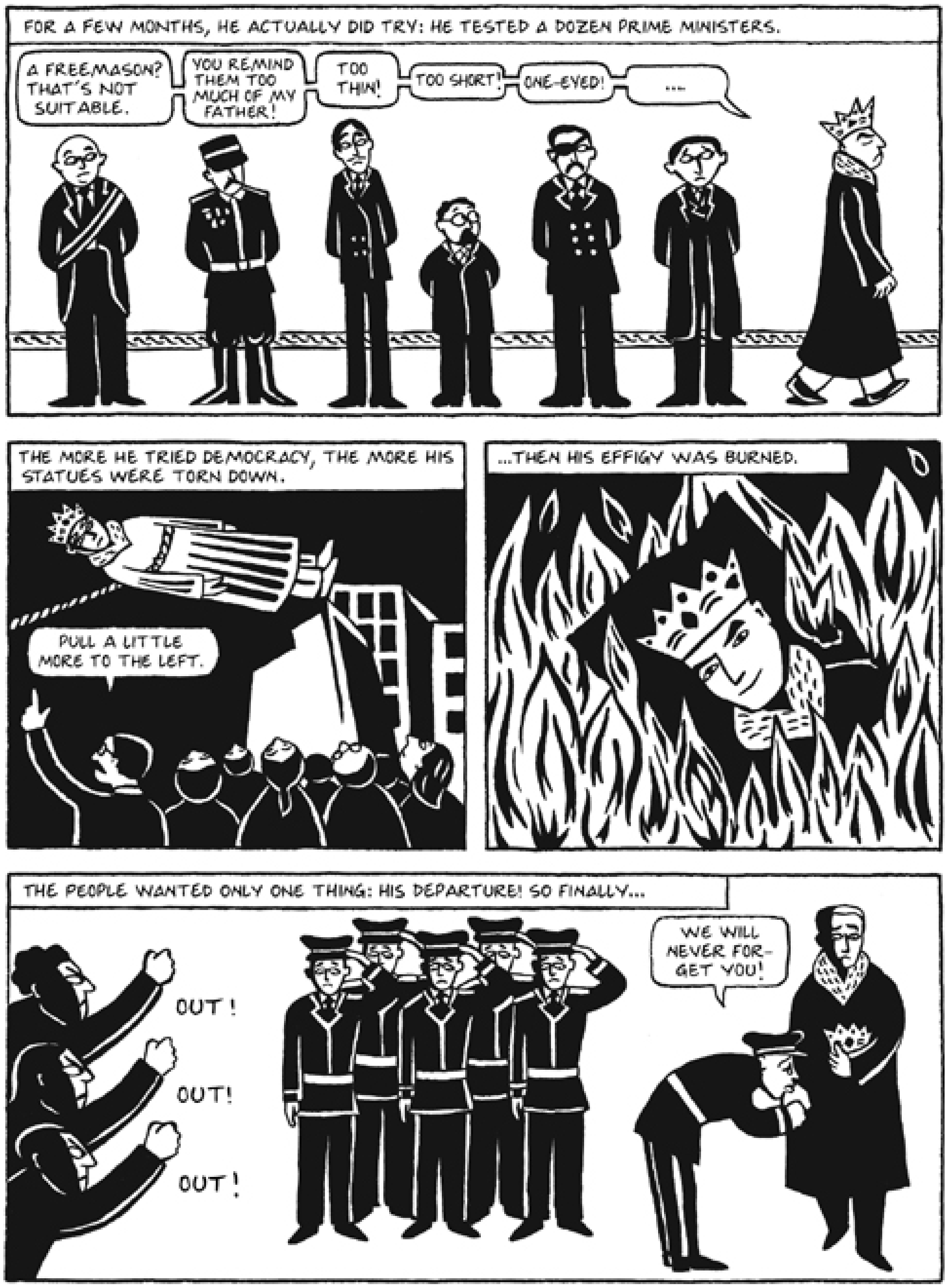

DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE SEEING HER?
EHH...
BEE GEES
WITHOUT ANY HESITATION, HOSSEIN GAVE ALL THE LETTERS HE HAD RECEIVED TO MY FATHER!
BUT THIS IS MARJI'S HAND-WRITING!
TELL ME WHAT THESE ARE!
LETTERS!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US ANYTHING?
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR LOVE WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
WHY IS THAT?
BECAUSE IN THIS COUNTRY YOU MUST STAY WITHIN YOUR OWN SOCIAL CLASS.
BUT IS IT HER FAULT THAT SHE WAS BORN WHERE SHE WAS BORN???
DAD, ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST SOCIAL CLASSES?
WHEN I WENT BACK TO HER ROOM SHE WAS CRYING. WE WERE NOT IN THE SAME SOCIAL CLASS BUT AT LEAST WE WERE IN THE SAME BED.


WHEN I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR THE REVOLUTION I MADE MY DECISION.
TOMORROW WE ARE GOING TO DEMONSTRATE.
WE ARE NOT ALLOWED!
DON'T WORRY! WE ARE GOING ANYWAY!
SO THE NEXT DAY...
TAKE CARE!
MEHRI, DON'T FORGET TO COOK HER SOME CHICKEN.
YES, MADAM.
SEE YOU LATER!
FOR ONCE SHE DIDN'T INSIST ON COMING WITH US.
THERE IS THE DEMONSTRATION...
WE SHOUTED FROM MORNING TILL NIGHT.

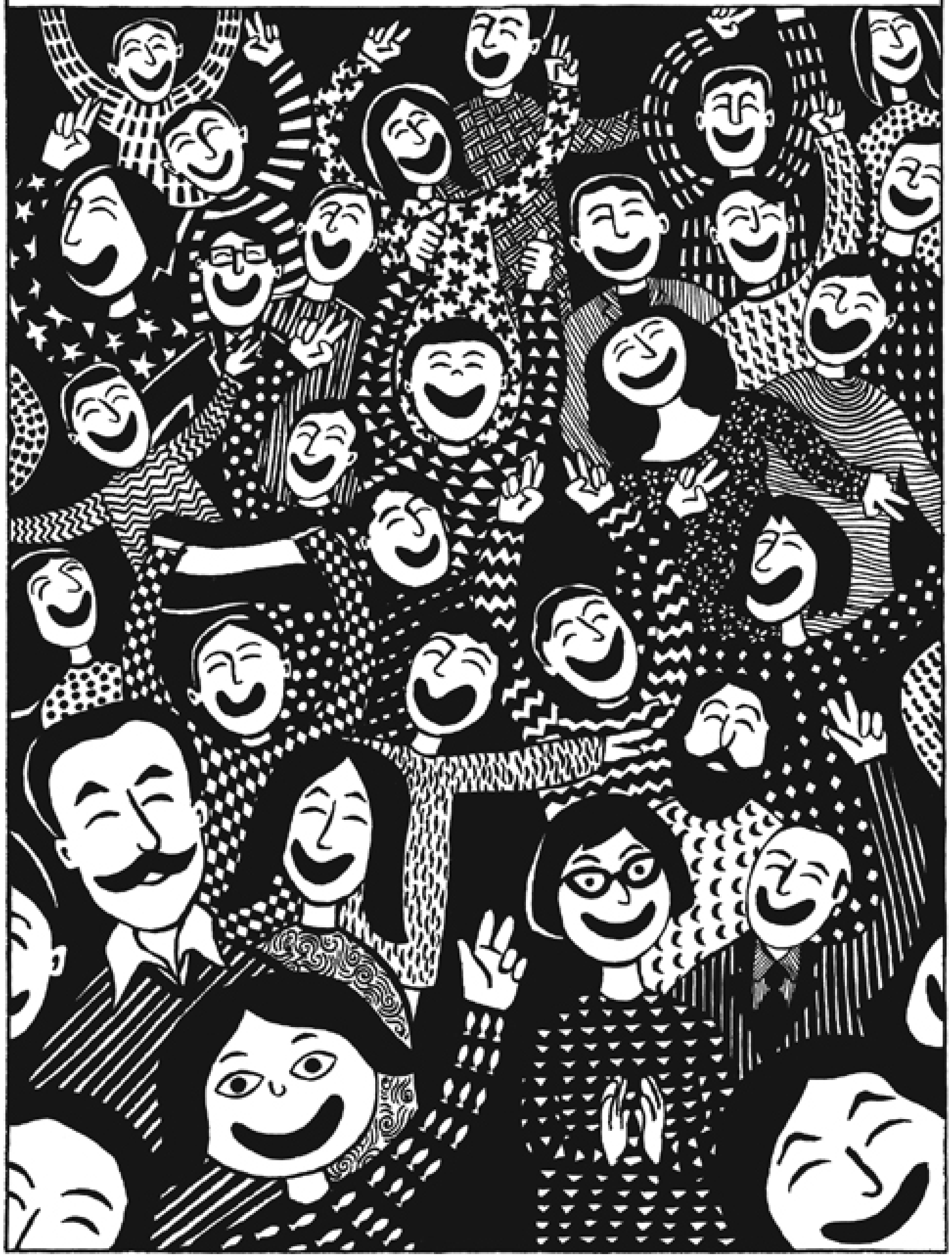

IT'S LATE. WE HAVE TO GO HOME.
YES.
LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC!
DOWN WITH THE SHAH!
GOOD LORD! WHERE THE DEVIL WERE YOU?
WE HAD DEMONSTRATED ON THE VERY DAY WE SHOULDN'T HAVE: ON "BLACK FRIDAY." THAT DAY THERE WERE SO MANY KILLED IN ONE OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS THAT A RUMOR SPREAD THAT ISRAELI SOLDIERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SLAUGHTER.
BUT IN FACT IT WAS REALLY OUR OWN WHO HAD ATTACKED US.

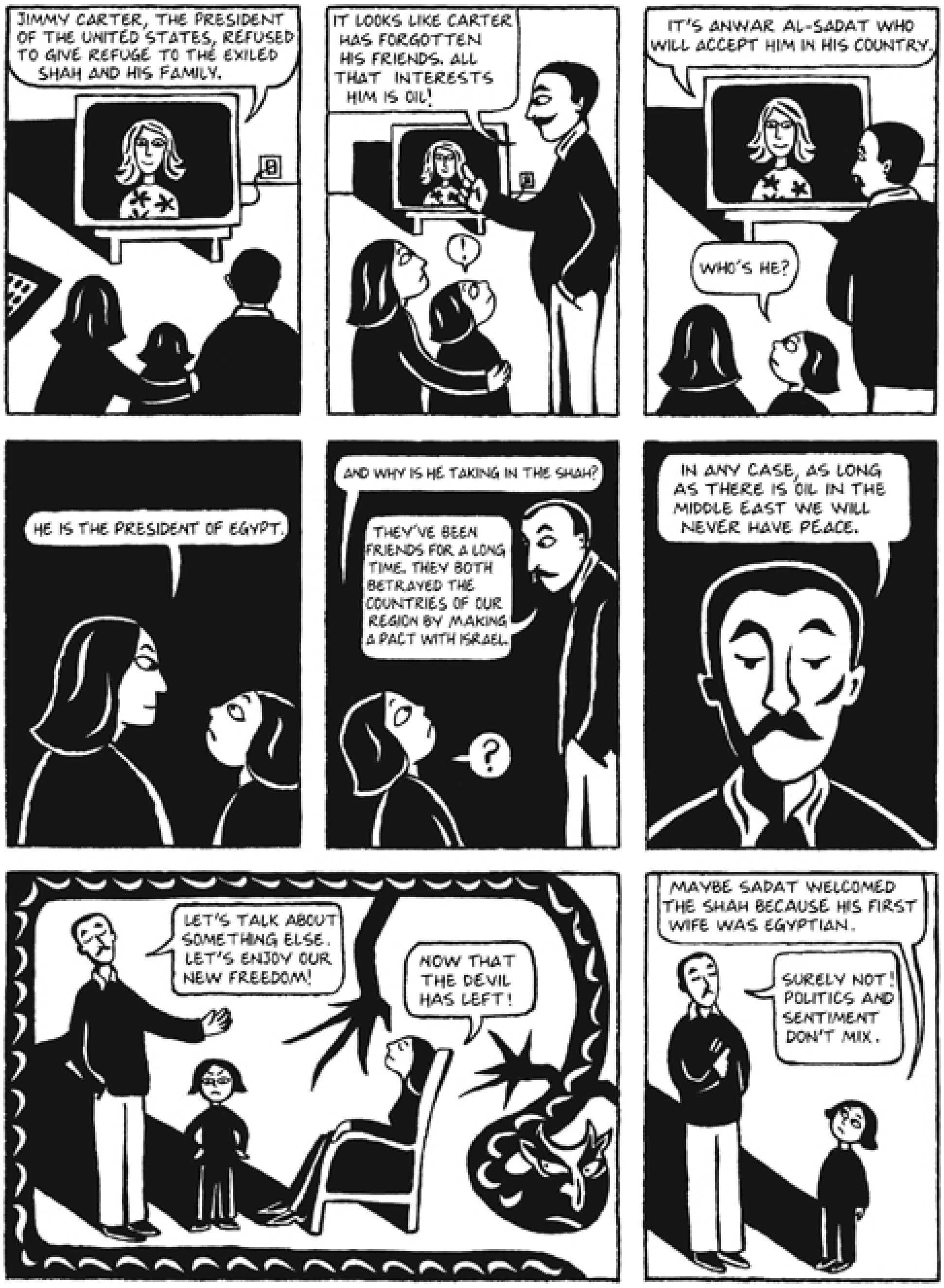
# THE PARTY

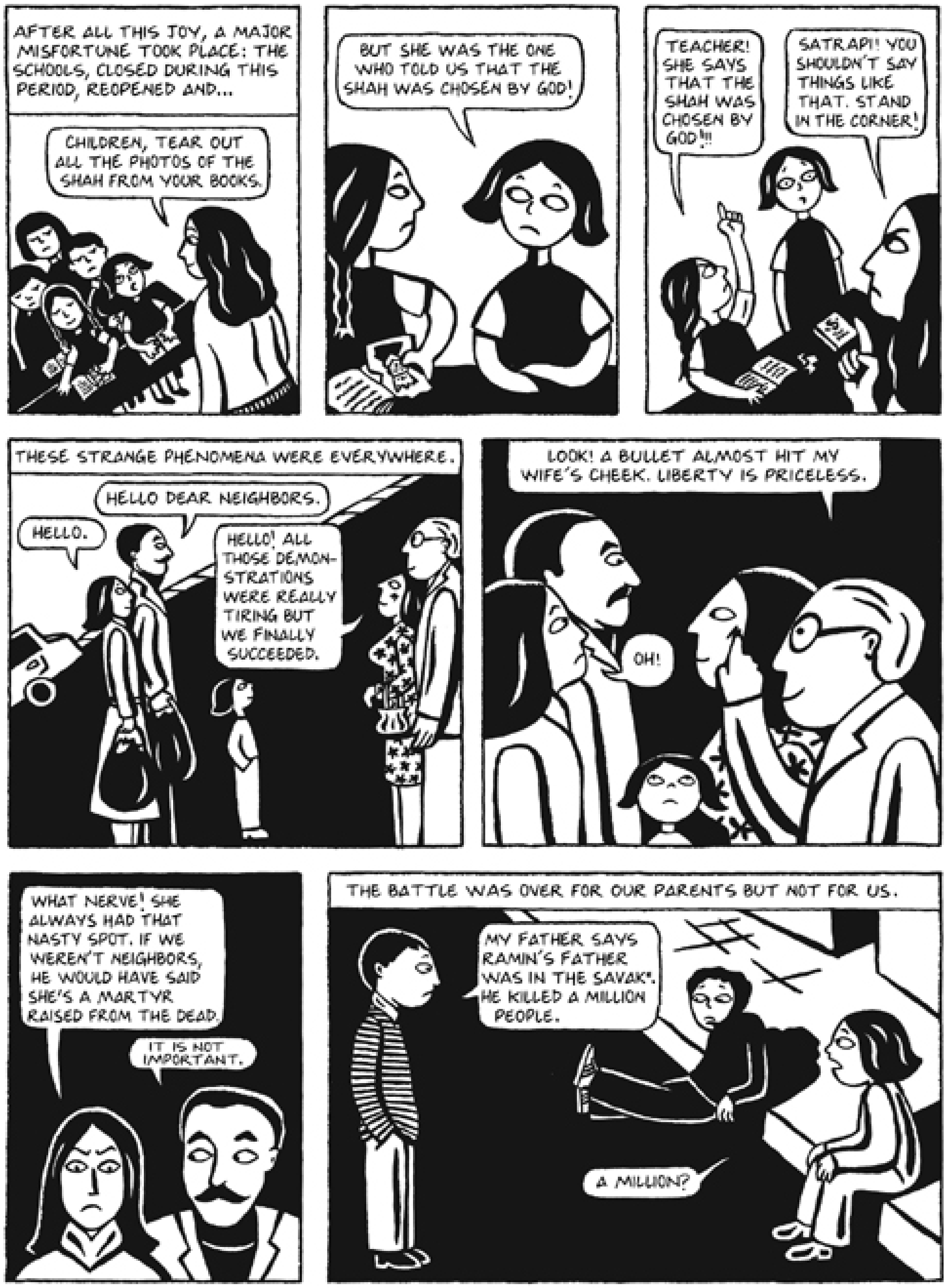

AFTER BLACK FRIDAY, THERE WAS ONE MASSACRE AFTER ANOTHER. MANY PEOPLE WERE KILLED.
THE END OF THE SHAH'S REIGN WAS NEAR.
ONE DAY HE MADE A DECLARATION ON TV.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR REVOLT.
TOGETHER WE WILL TRY TO MARCH TOWARDS DEMOCRACY.
AFTER ALL THAT HE HAS DONE!
QUIET!


FOR A FEW MONTHS, HE ACTUALLY DID TRY: HE TESTED A DOZEN PRIME MINISTERS.
A FREEMASON? THAT'S NOT SUITABLE.
YOU REMIND THEM TOO MUCH OF MY FATHER!
TOO THIN!
TOO SHORT!
ONE-EYED!
...
THE MORE HE TRIED DEMOCRACY, THE MORE HIS STATUES WERE TORN DOWN.
PULL A LITTLE MORE TO THE LEFT.
...THEN HIS EFFIGY WAS BURNED.
THE PEOPLE WANTED ONLY ONE THING: HIS DEPARTURE! SO FINALLY...
OUT!
OUT!
OUT!
WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU!

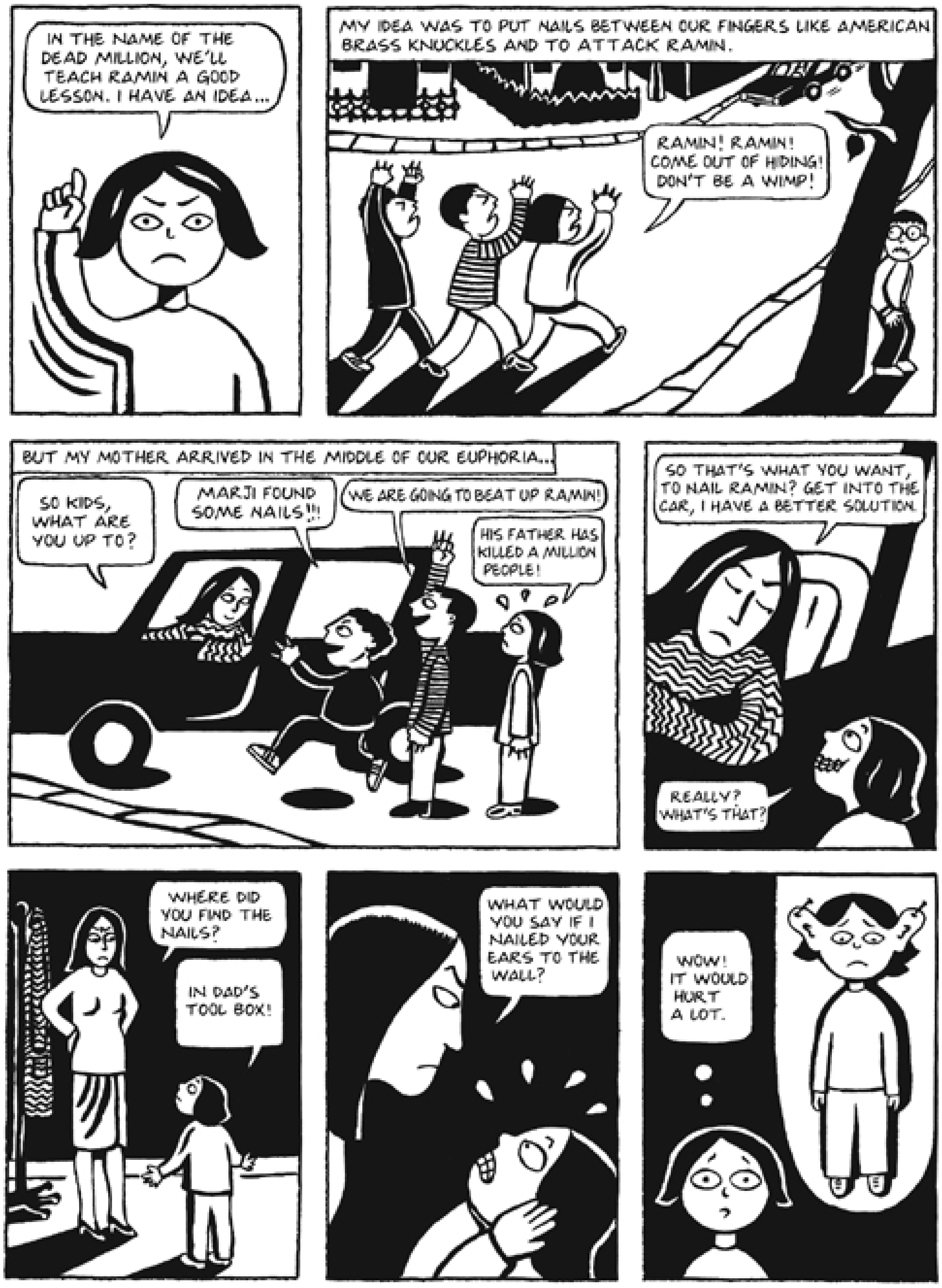
THE DAY HE LEFT, THE COUNTRY HAD THE BIGGEST CELEBRATION OF ITS ENTIRE HISTORY.

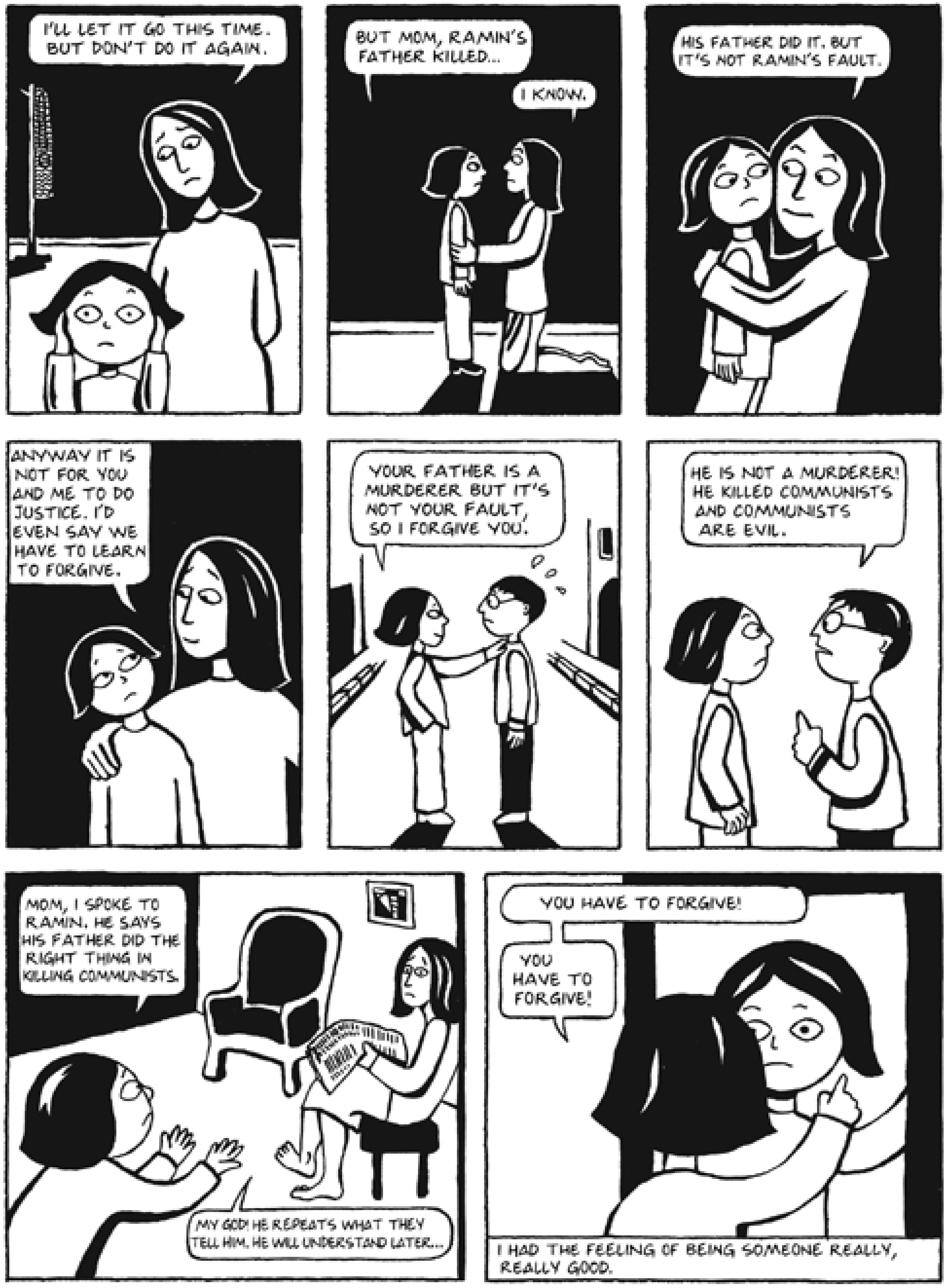



JIMMY CARTER, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, REFUSED TO GIVE REFUGE TO THE EXILED SHAH AND HIS FAMILY.
IT LOOKS LIKE CARTER HAS FORGOTTEN HIS FRIENDS. ALL THAT INTERESTS HIM IS OIL!
!
IT'S ANWAR AL-SADAT WHO WILL ACCEPT HIM IN HIS COUNTRY.
WHO'S HE?
HE IS THE PRESIDENT OF EGYPT.
AND WHY IS HE TAKING IN THE SHAH?
THEY'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR A LONG TIME. THEY BOTH BETRAYED THE COUNTRIES OF OUR REGION BY MAKING A PACT WITH ISRAEL.
?
IN ANY CASE, AS LONG AS THERE IS OIL IN THE MIDDLE EAST WE WILL NEVER HAVE PEACE.
LET'S TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE. LET'S ENJOY OUR NEW FREEDOM!
NOW THAT THE DEVIL HAS LEFT!
MAYBE SADAT WELCOMED THE SHAH BECAUSE HIS FIRST WIFE WAS EGYPTIAN.
SURELY NOT! POLITICS AND SENTIMENT DON'T MIX.

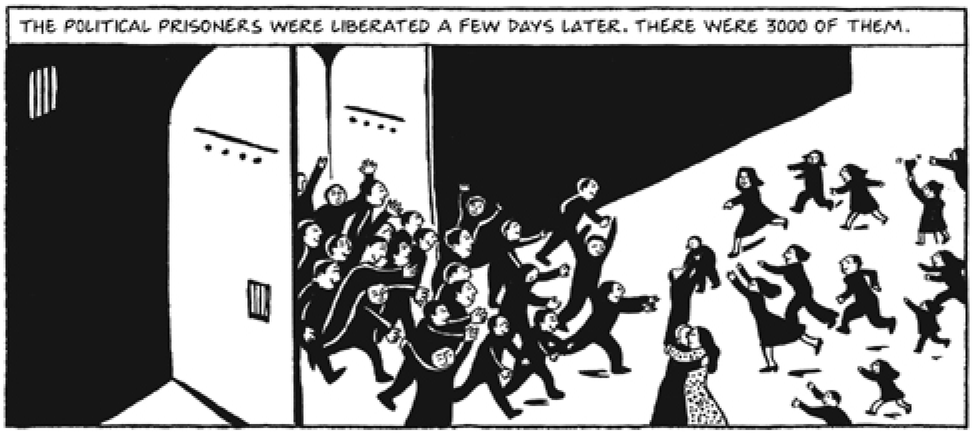

AFTER ALL THIS JOY, A MAJOR MISFORTUNE TOOK PLACE: THE SCHOOLS, CLOSED DURING THIS PERIOD, REOPENED AND...
CHILDREN, TEAR OUT ALL THE PHOTOS OF THE SHAH FROM YOUR BOOKS.
BUT SHE WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD US THAT THE SHAH WAS CHOSEN BY GOD!
TEACHER! SHE SAYS THAT THE SHAH WAS CHOSEN BY GOD!!!
SATRAPI! YOU SHOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT. STAND IN THE CORNER!
THESE STRANGE PHENOMENA WERE EVERYWHERE.
HELLO DEAR NEIGHBORS.
HELLO.
HELLO! ALL THOSE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE REALLY TIRING BUT WE FINALLY SUCCEEDED.
LOOK! A BULLET ALMOST HIT MY WIFE'S CHEEK. LIBERTY IS PRICELESS.
OH!
WHAT NERVE! SHE ALWAYS HAD THAT NASTY SPOT. IF WE WEREN'T NEIGHBORS, HE WOULD HAVE SAID SHE'S A MARTYR RAISED FROM THE DEAD.
IT IS NOT IMPORTANT.
THE BATTLE WAS OVER FOR OUR PARENTS BUT NOT FOR US.
MY FATHER SAYS RAMIN'S FATHER WAS IN THE SAVAK*. HE KILLED A MILLION PEOPLE.
A MILLION?

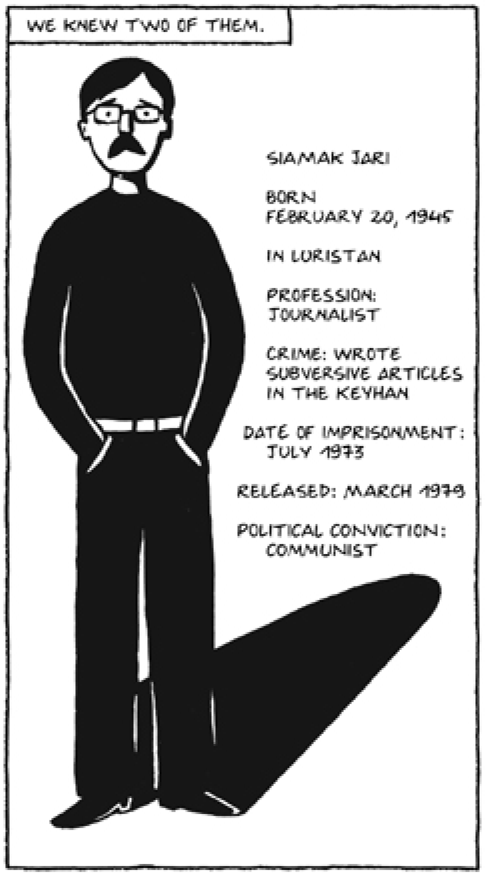
* SECRET POLICE OF THE SHAH'S REGIME.

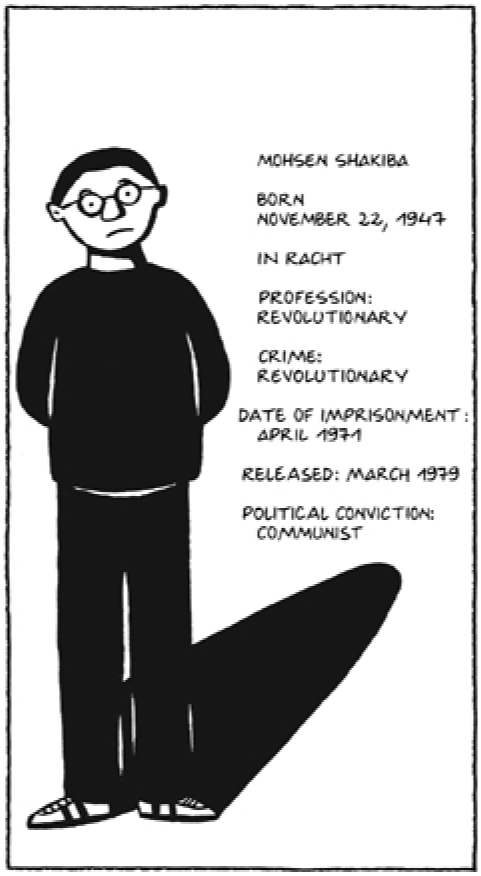

IN THE NAME OF THE DEAD MILLION, WE'LL TEACH RAMIN A GOOD LESSON. I HAVE AN IDEA...
MY IDEA WAS TO PUT NAILS BETWEEN OUR FINGERS LIKE AMERICAN BRASS KNUCKLES AND TO ATTACK RAMIN.
RAMIN! RAMIN! COME OUT OF HIDING! DON'T BE A WIMP!
BUT MY MOTHER ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR EUPHORIA...
SO KIDS, WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
MARJI FOUND SOME NAILS!!!
WE ARE GOING TO BEAT UP RAMIN!
HIS FATHER HAS KILLED A MILLION PEOPLE!
SO THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, TO NAIL RAMIN? GET INTO THE CAR, I HAVE A BETTER SOLUTION.
REALLY? WHAT'S THAT?
WHERE DID YOU FIND THE NAILS?
IN DAD'S TOOL BOX!
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I NAILED YOUR EARS TO THE WALL?
WOW! IT WOULD HURT A LOT.

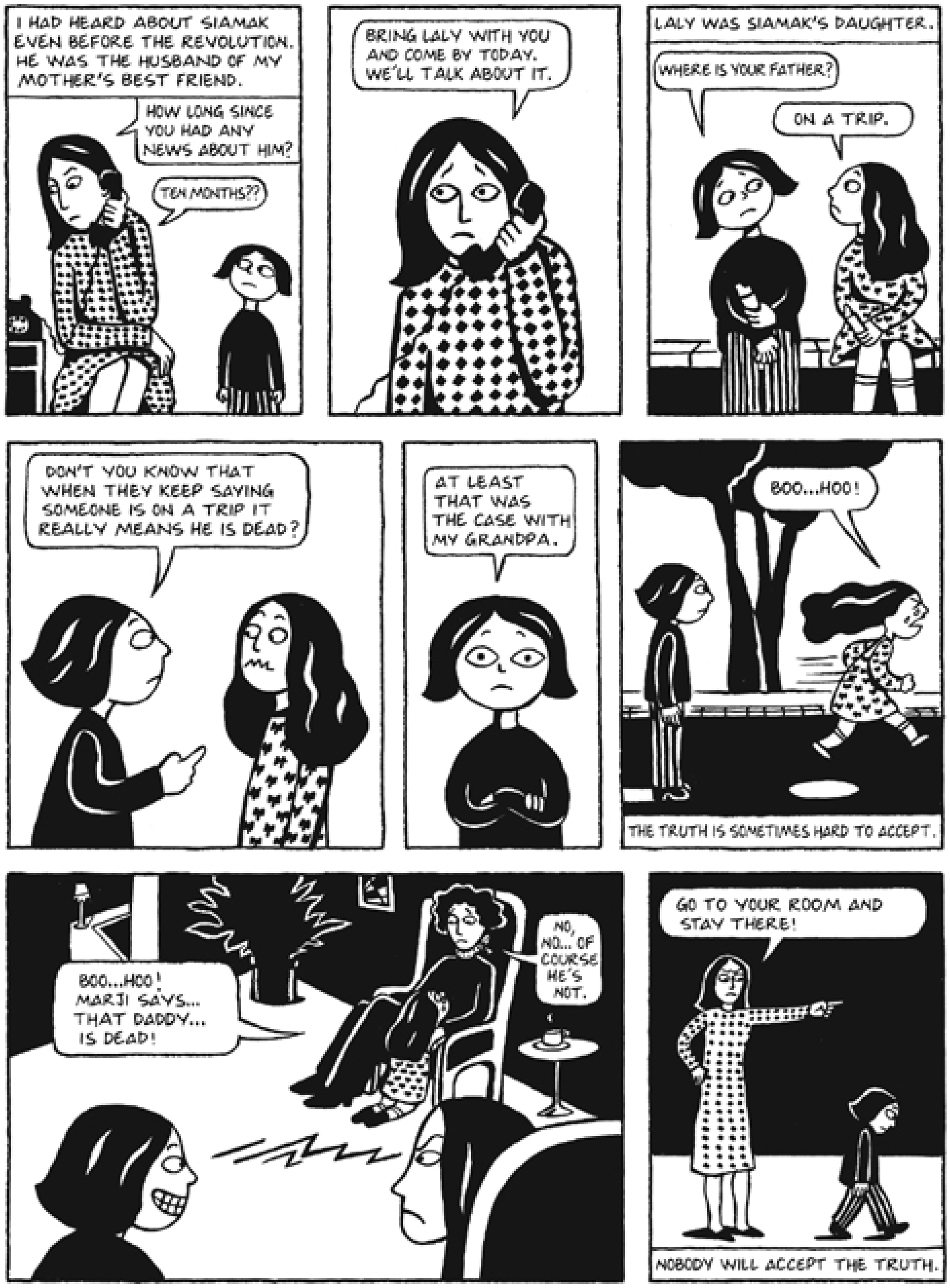

I'LL LET IT GO THIS TIME. BUT DON'T DO IT AGAIN.
BUT MOM, RAMIN'S FATHER KILLED...
I KNOW.
HIS FATHER DID IT. BUT IT'S NOT RAMIN'S FAULT.
ANYWAY IT IS NOT FOR YOU AND ME TO DO JUSTICE. I'D EVEN SAY WE HAVE TO LEARN TO FORGIVE.
YOUR FATHER IS A MURDERER BUT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, SO I FORGIVE YOU.
HE IS NOT A MURDERER! HE KILLED COMMUNISTS AND COMMUNISTS ARE EVIL.
MOM, I SPOKE TO RAMIN. HE SAYS HIS FATHER DID THE RIGHT THING IN KILLING COMMUNISTS.
MY GOD! HE REPEATS WHAT THEY TELL HIM. HE WILL UNDERSTAND LATER...
YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE!
YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE!
I HAD THE FEELING OF BEING SOMEONE REALLY, REALLY GOOD.

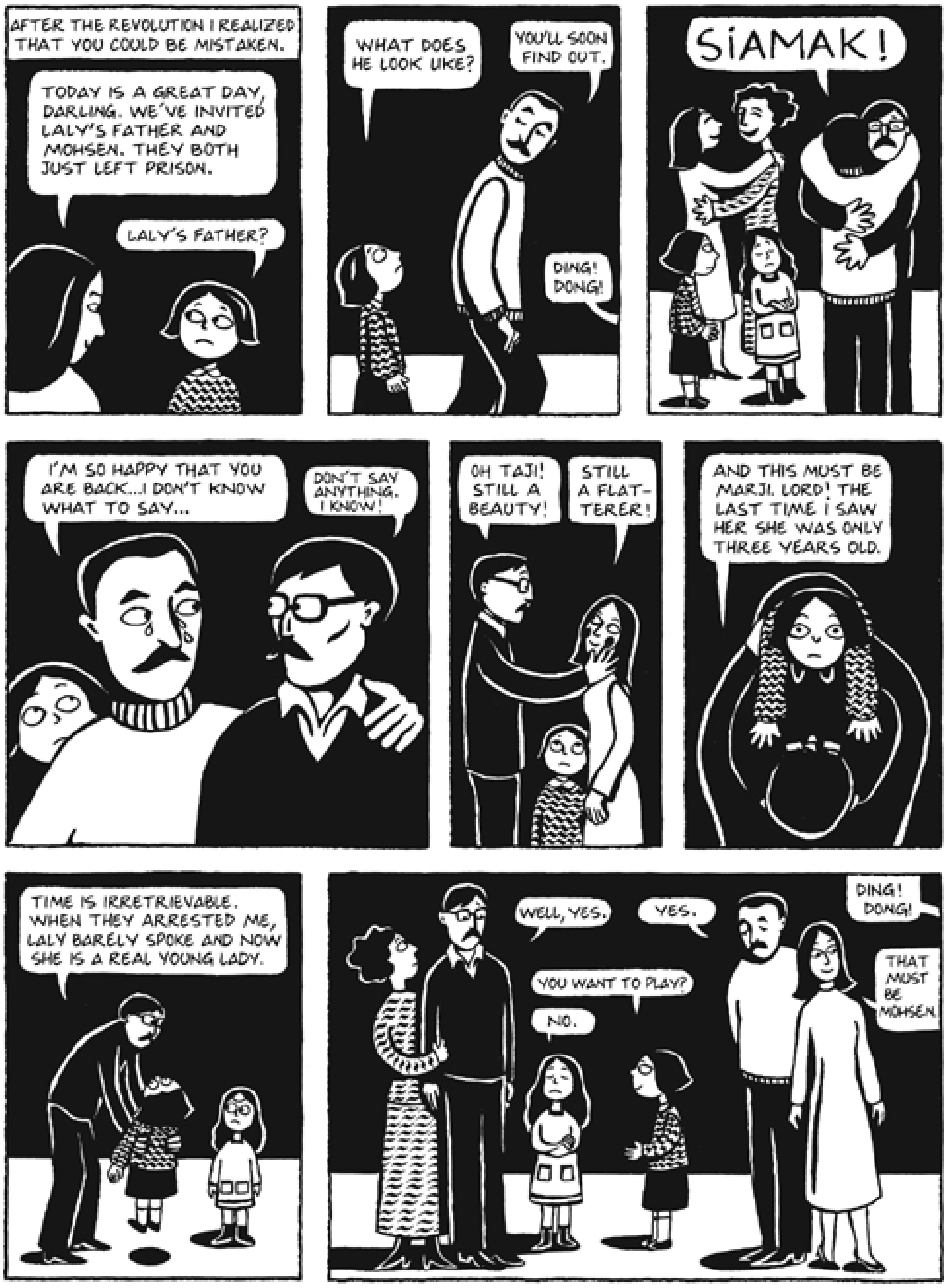
# THE HEROES

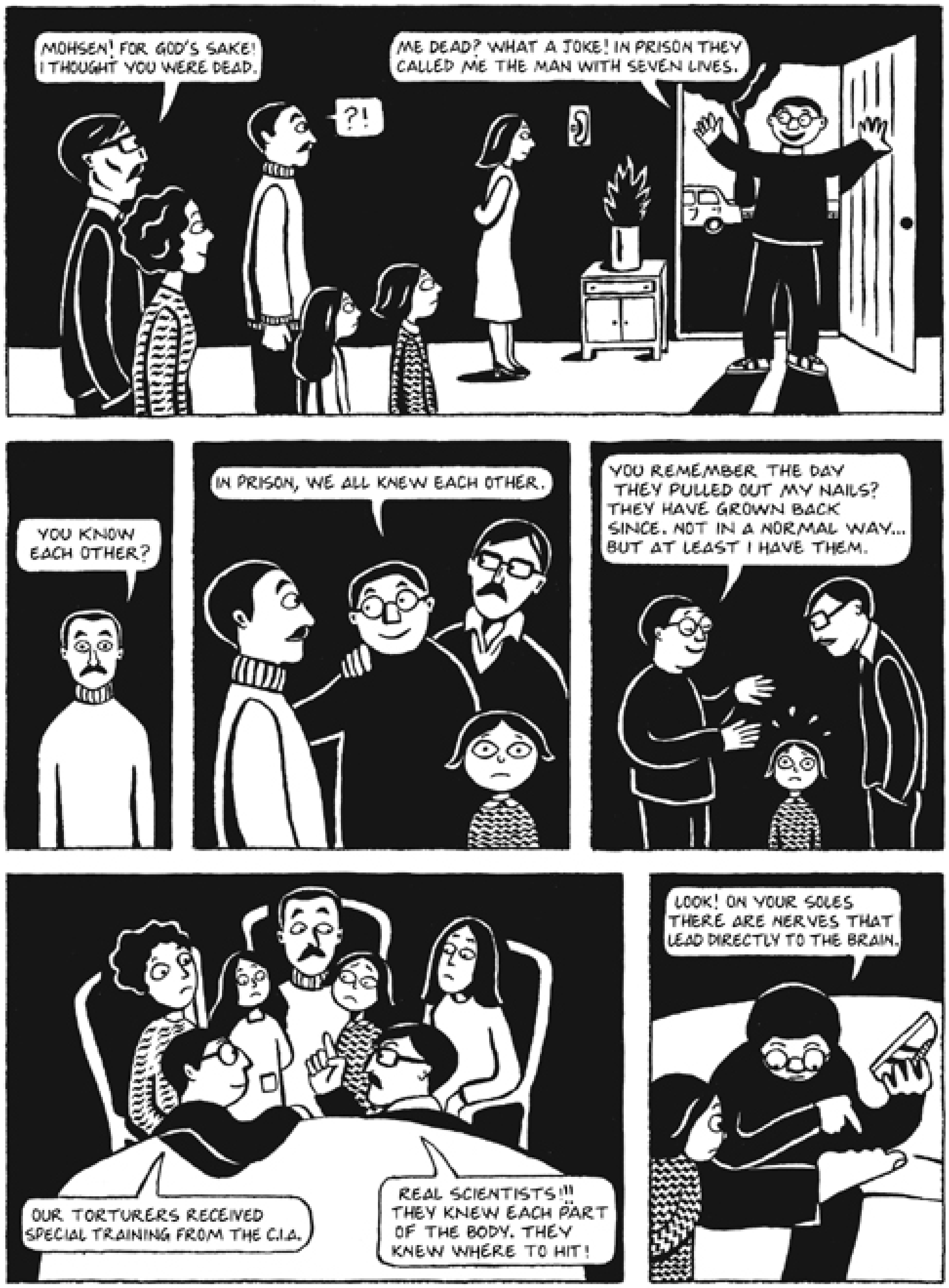

THE POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE LIBERATED A FEW DAYS LATER. THERE WERE 3000 OF THEM.

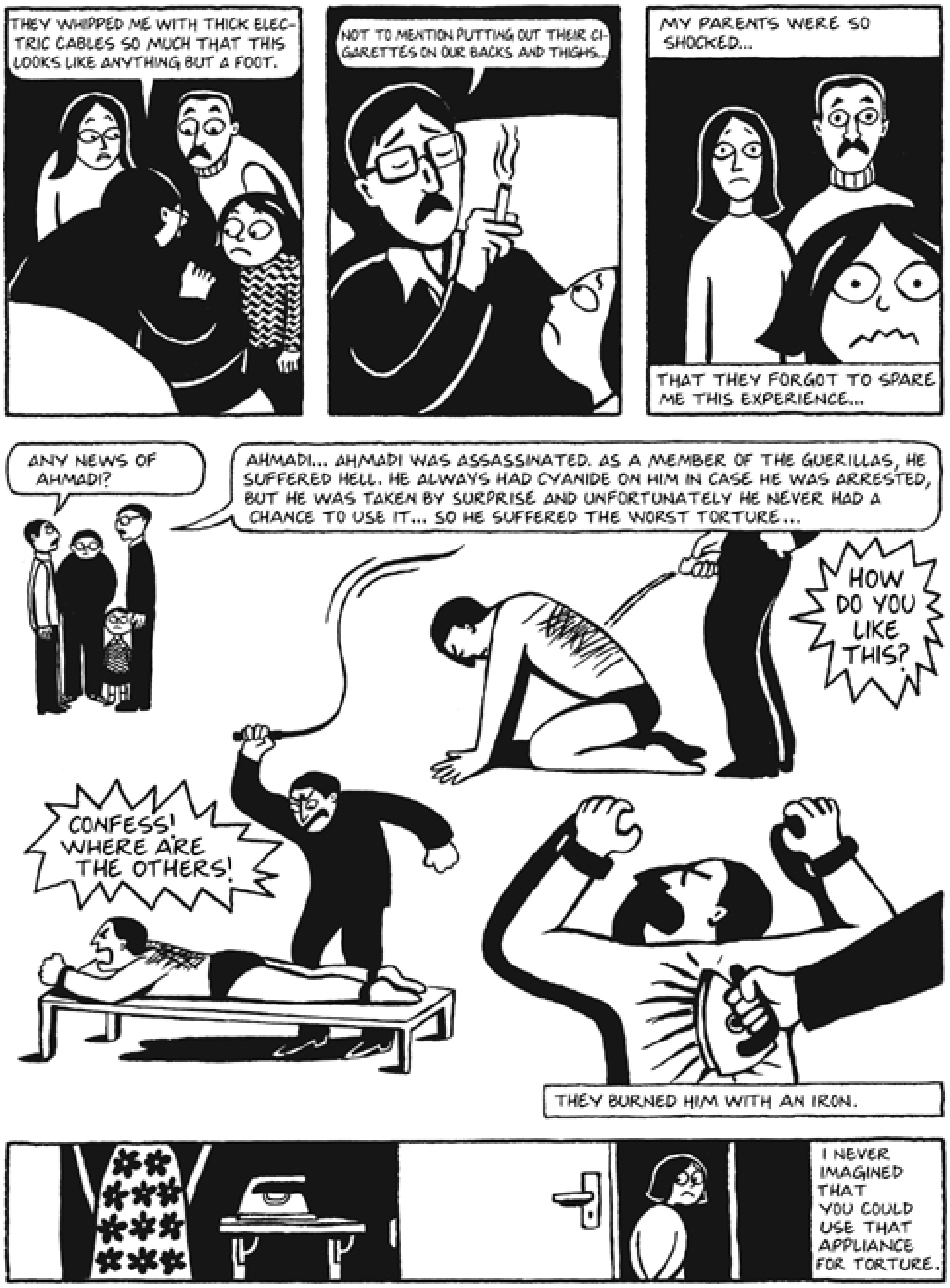

WE KNEW TWO OF THEM.
SIAMAK JARI
BORN
FEBRUARY 20, 1945
IN LURISTAN
PROFESSION:
JOURNALIST
CRIME: WROTE
SUBVERSIVE ARTICLES
IN THE KEYHAN
DATE OF IMPRISONMENT:
JULY 1973
RELEASED: MARCH 1979
POLITICAL CONVICTION:
COMMUNIST

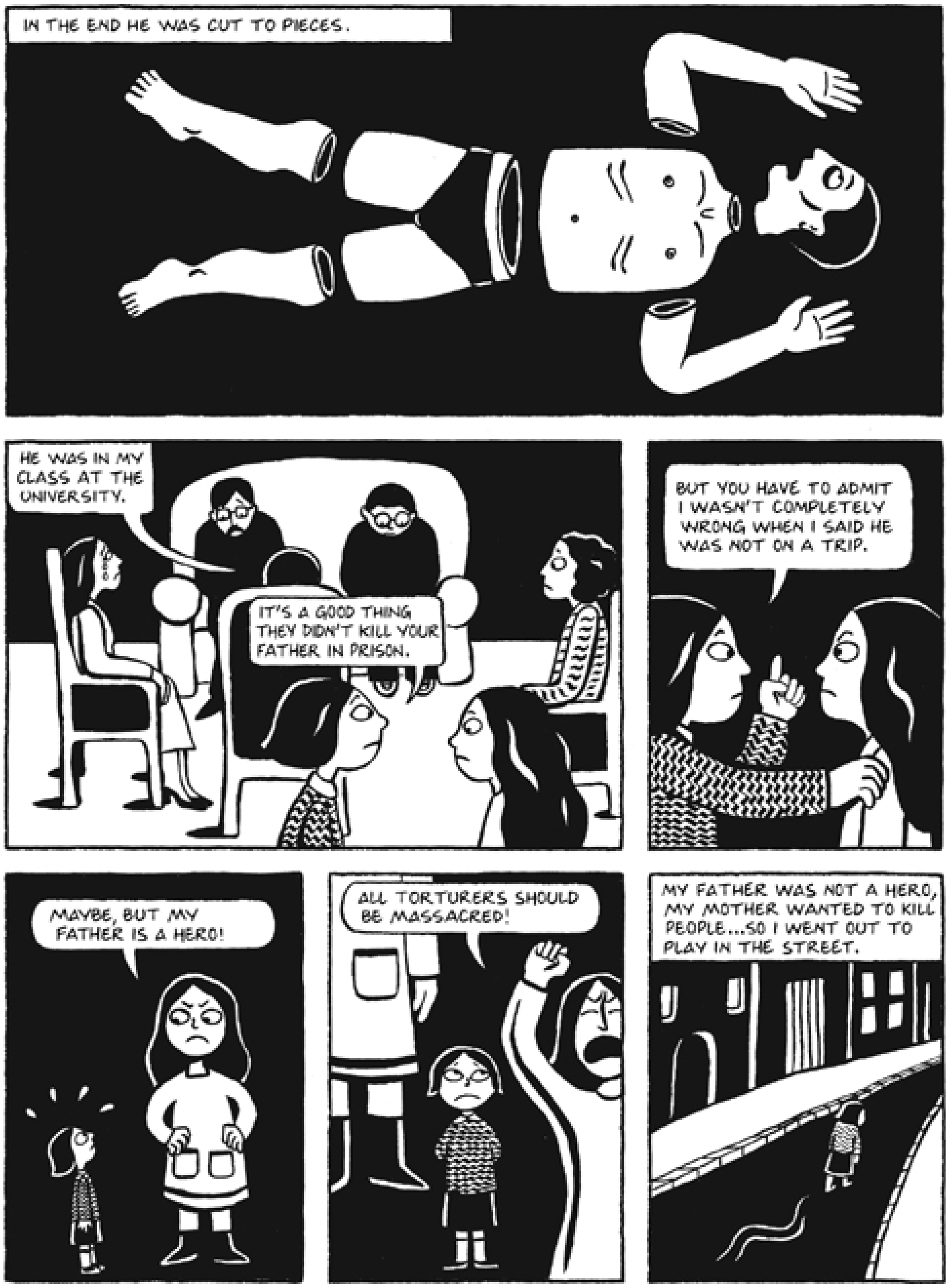

MOHSEN SHAKIBA
BORN
NOVEMBER 22, 1947
IN RACHT
PROFESSION:
REVOLUTIONARY
CRIME:
REVOLUTIONARY
DATE OF IMPRISONMENT:
APRIL 1971
RELEASED: MARCH 1979
POLITICAL CONVICTION:
COMMUNIST

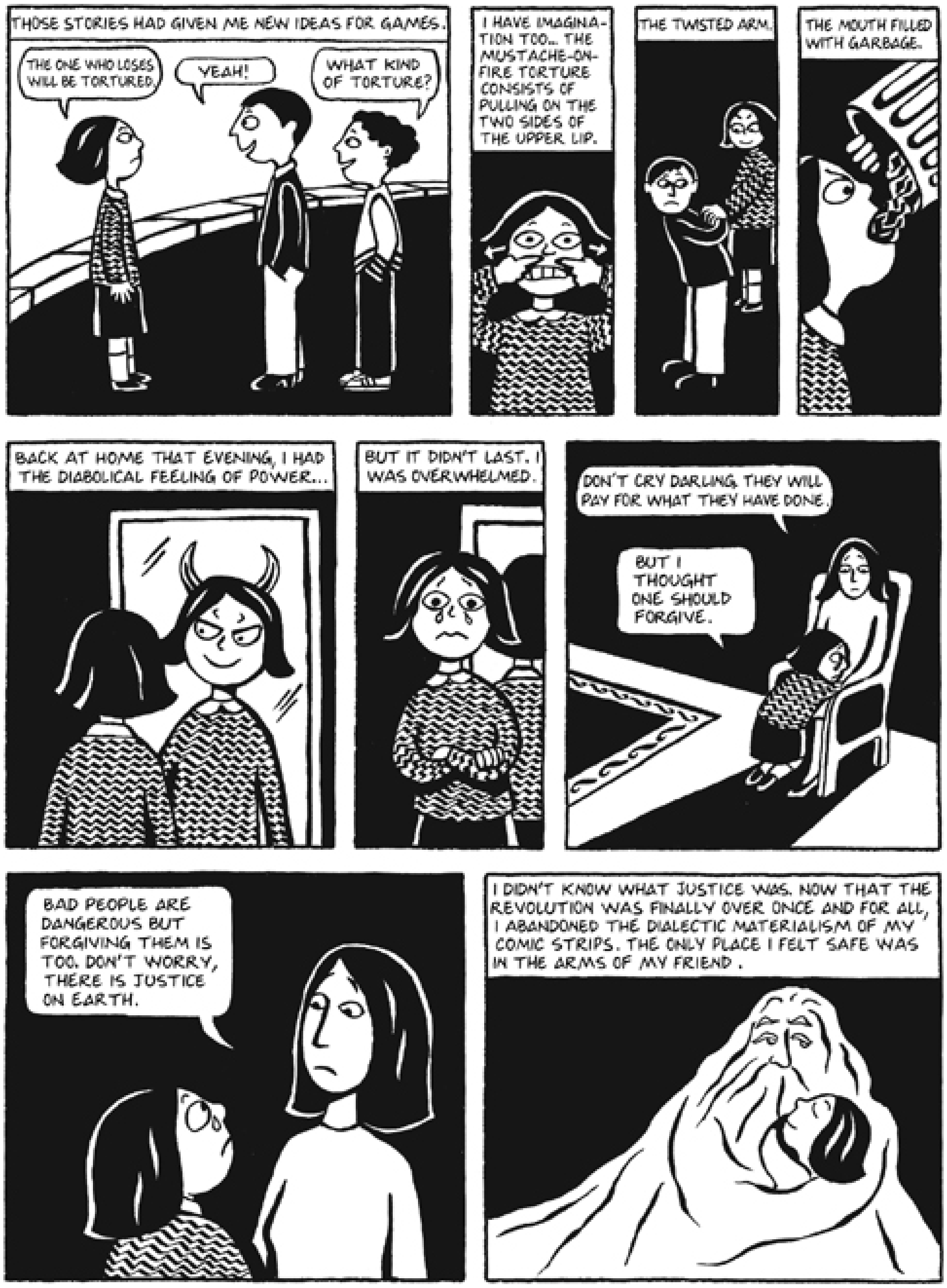

I HAD HEARD ABOUT SIAMAK EVEN BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. HE WAS THE HUSBAND OF MY MOTHER'S BEST FRIEND.
HOW LONG SINCE YOU HAD ANY NEWS ABOUT HIM?
TEN MONTHS??
BRING LALY WITH YOU AND COME BY TODAY. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT.
LALY WAS SIAMAK'S DAUGHTER.
WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?
ON A TRIP.
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT WHEN THEY KEEP SAYING SOMEONE IS ON A TRIP IT REALLY MEANS HE IS DEAD?
AT LEAST THAT WAS THE CASE WITH MY GRANDPA.
BOO...HOO!
THE TRUTH IS SOMETIMES HARD TO ACCEPT.
BOO...HOO! MARJI SAYS... THAT DADDY... IS DEAD!
NO, NO... OF COURSE HE'S NOT.
GO TO YOUR ROOM AND STAY THERE!
NOBODY WILL ACCEPT THE TRUTH.


AFTER THE REVOLUTION I REALIZED THAT YOU COULD BE MISTAKEN.
TODAY IS A GREAT DAY, DARLING. WE'VE INVITED LALY'S FATHER AND MOHSEN. THEY BOTH JUST LEFT PRISON.
LALY'S FATHER?
WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?
YOU'LL SOON FIND OUT.
DING! DONG!
SIAMAK!
I'M SO HAPPY THAT YOU ARE BACK...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
DON'T SAY ANYTHING. I KNOW!
OH TAJI! STILL A BEAUTY!
STILL A FLATTERER!
AND THIS MUST BE MARJI. LORD! THE LAST TIME I SAW HER SHE WAS ONLY THREE YEARS OLD.
TIME IS IRRETRIEVABLE. WHEN THEY ARRESTED ME, LALY BARELY SPOKE AND NOW SHE IS A REAL YOUNG LADY.
WELL, YES.
YES.
YOU WANT TO PLAY?
NO.
DING! DONG!
THAT MUST BE MOHSEN.

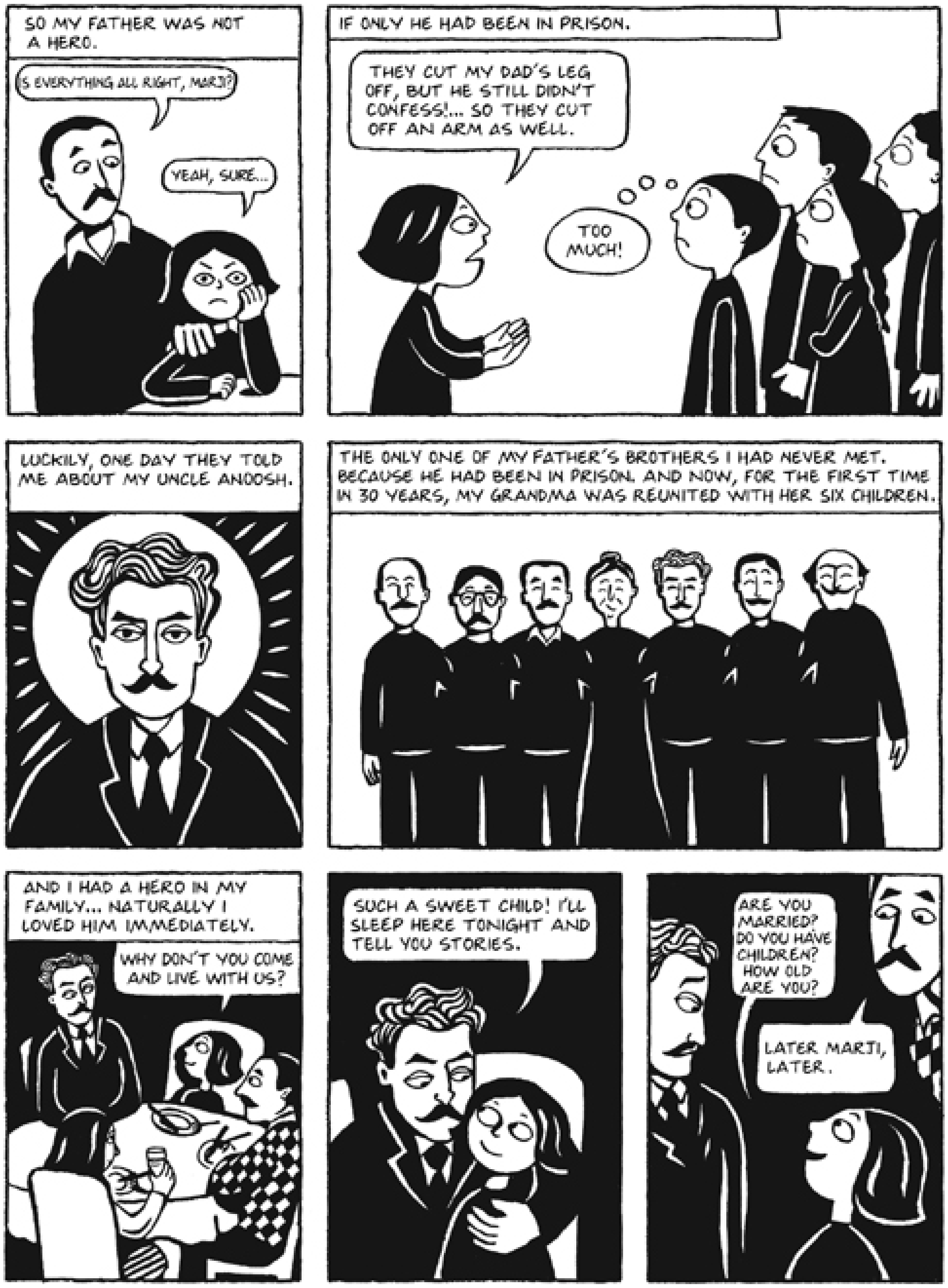

MOHSEN! FOR GOD'S SAKE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
?!
ME DEAD? WHAT A JOKE! IN PRISON THEY CALLED ME THE MAN WITH SEVEN LIVES.
YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?
IN PRISON, WE ALL KNEW EACH OTHER.
YOU REMEMBER THE DAY THEY PULLED OUT MY NAILS? THEY HAVE GROWN BACK SINCE. NOT IN A NORMAL WAY... BUT AT LEAST I HAVE THEM.
OUR TORTURERS RECEIVED SPECIAL TRAINING FROM THE C.I.A.
REAL SCIENTISTS!!! THEY KNEW EACH PART OF THE BODY. THEY KNEW WHERE TO HIT!
LOOK! ON YOUR SOLES THERE ARE NERVES THAT LEAD DIRECTLY TO THE BRAIN.

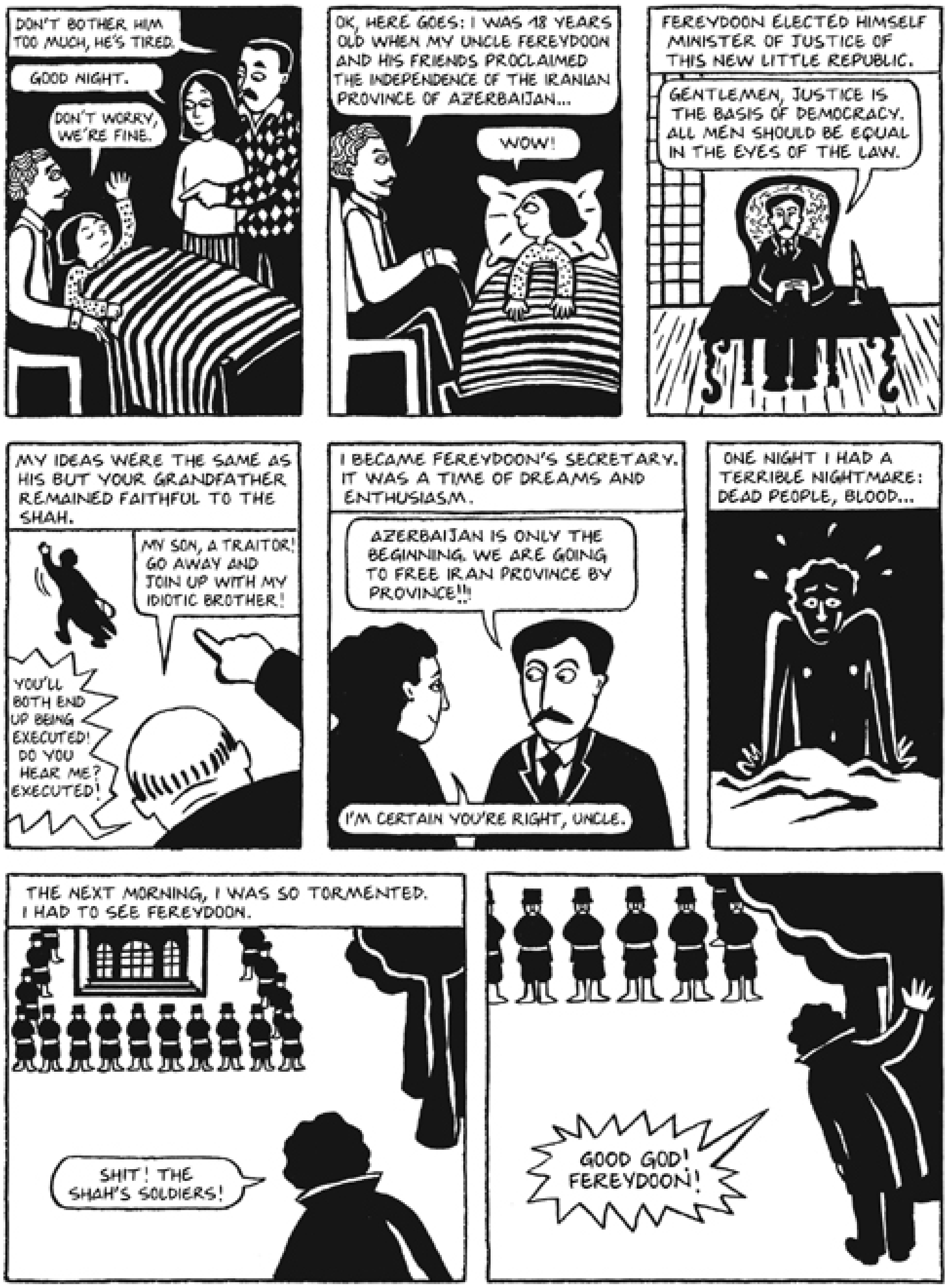

THEY WHIPPED ME WITH THICK ELECTRIC CABLES SO MUCH THAT THIS LOOKS LIKE ANYTHING BUT A FOOT.
NOT TO MENTION PUTTING OUT THEIR CIGARETTES ON OUR BACKS AND THIGHS...
MY PARENTS WERE SO SHOCKED...
THAT THEY FORGOT TO SPARE ME THIS EXPERIENCE...
ANY NEWS OF AHMADI?
AHMADI... AHMADI WAS ASSASSINATED. AS A MEMBER OF THE GUERILLAS, HE SUFFERED HELL. HE ALWAYS HAD CYANIDE ON HIM IN CASE HE WAS ARRESTED, BUT HE WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND UNFORTUNATELY HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO USE IT... SO HE SUFFERED THE WORST TORTURE...
HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS?
CONFESS! WHERE ARE THE OTHERS!
THEY BURNED HIM WITH AN IRON.
I NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU COULD USE THAT APPLIANCE FOR TORTURE.

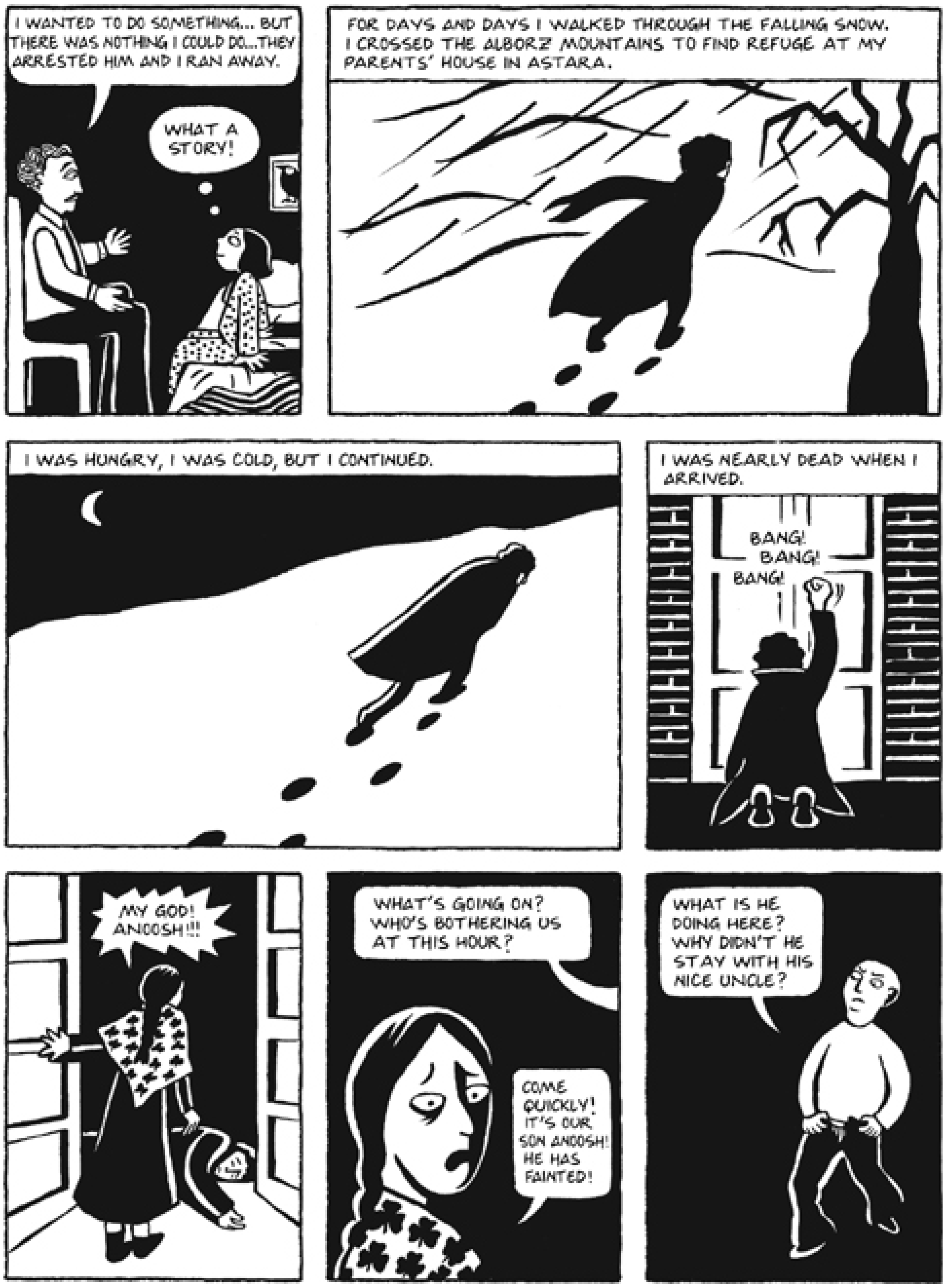

IN THE END HE WAS CUT TO PIECES.
HE WAS IN MY CLASS AT THE UNIVERSITY.
IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DIDN'T KILL YOUR FATHER IN PRISON.
BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT I WASN'T COMPLETELY WRONG WHEN I SAID HE WAS NOT ON A TRIP.
MAYBE, BUT MY FATHER IS A HERO!
ALL TORTURERS SHOULD BE MASSACRED!
MY FATHER WAS NOT A HERO, MY MOTHER WANTED TO KILL PEOPLE...SO I WENT OUT TO PLAY IN THE STREET.

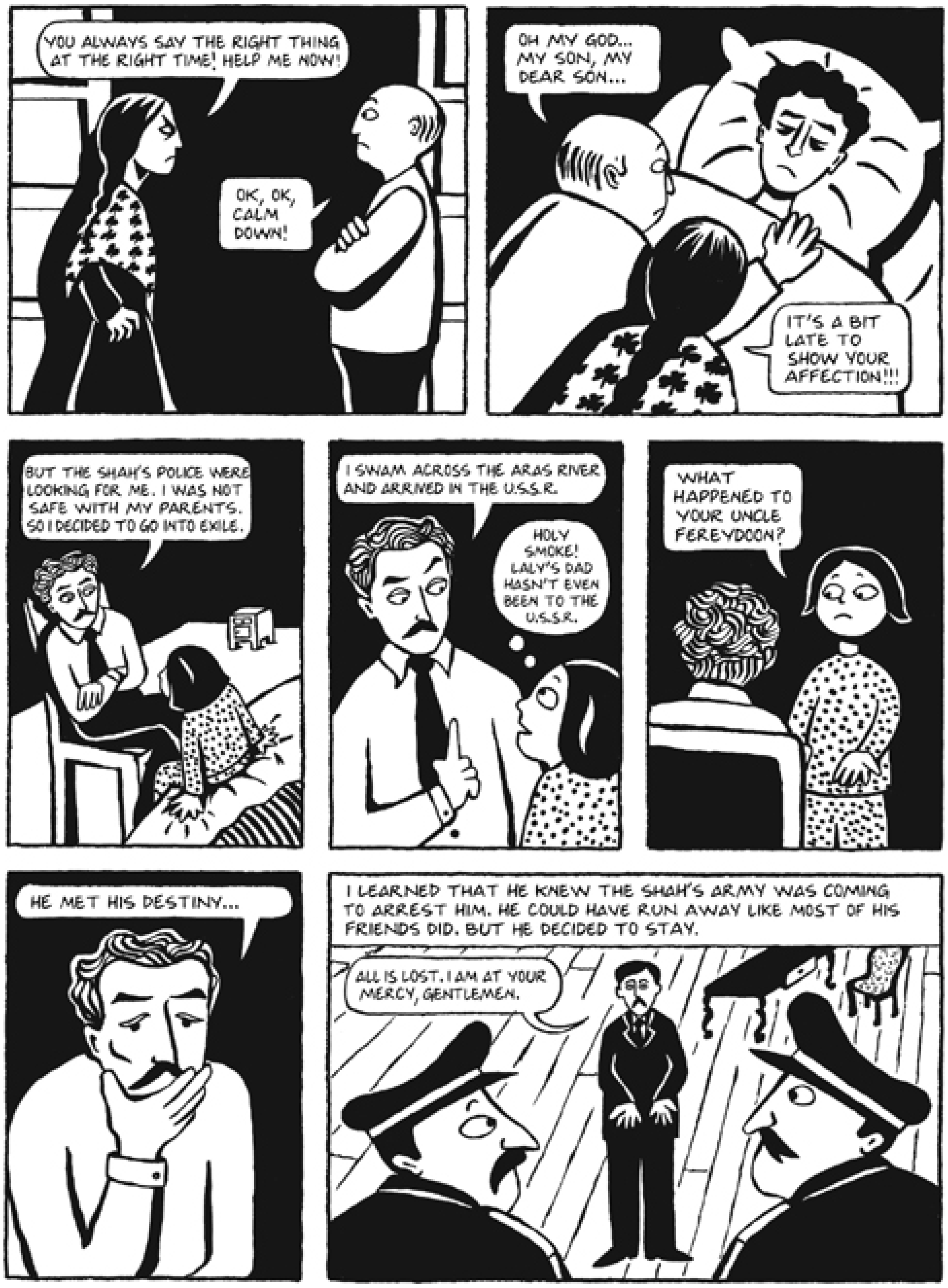

THOSE STORIES HAD GIVEN ME NEW IDEAS FOR GAMES.
THE ONE WHO LOSES WILL BE TORTURED.
YEAH!
WHAT KIND OF TORTURE?
I HAVE IMAGINATION TOO... THE MUSTACHE-ON-FIRE TORTURE CONSISTS OF PULLING ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE UPPER LIP.
THE TWISTED ARM.
THE MOUTH FILLED WITH GARBAGE.
BACK AT HOME THAT EVENING, I HAD THE DIABOLICAL FEELING OF POWER...
BUT IT DIDN'T LAST. I WAS OVERWHELMED.
DON'T CRY DARLING. THEY WILL PAY FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE.
BUT I THOUGHT ONE SHOULD FORGIVE.
BAD PEOPLE ARE DANGEROUS BUT FORGIVING THEM IS TOO. DON'T WORRY, THERE IS JUSTICE ON EARTH.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT JUSTICE WAS. NOW THAT THE REVOLUTION WAS FINALLY OVER ONCE AND FOR ALL, I ABANDONED THE DIALECTIC MATERIALISM OF MY COMIC STRIPS. THE ONLY PLACE I FELT SAFE WAS IN THE ARMS OF MY FRIEND.

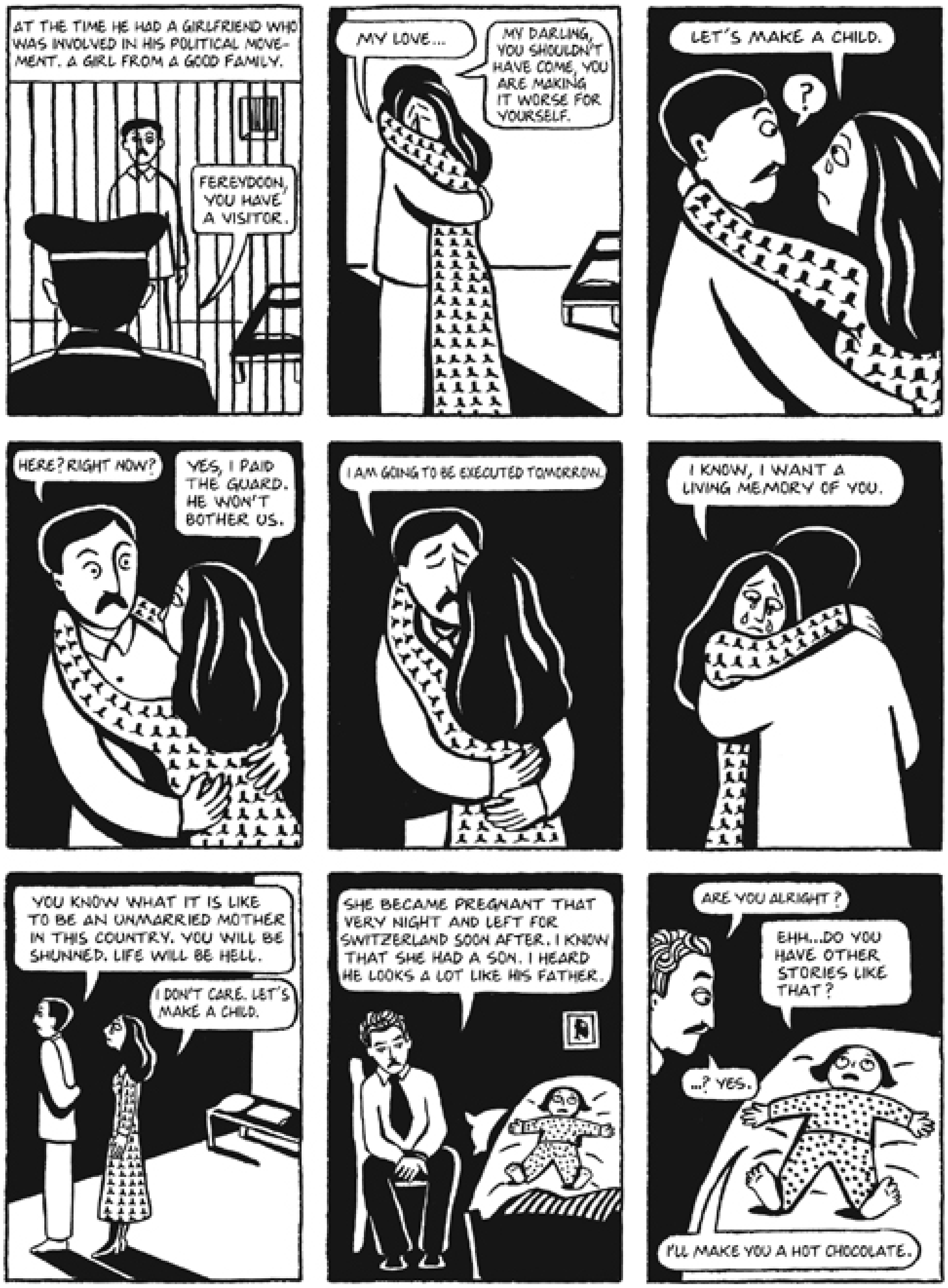
# MOSCOW

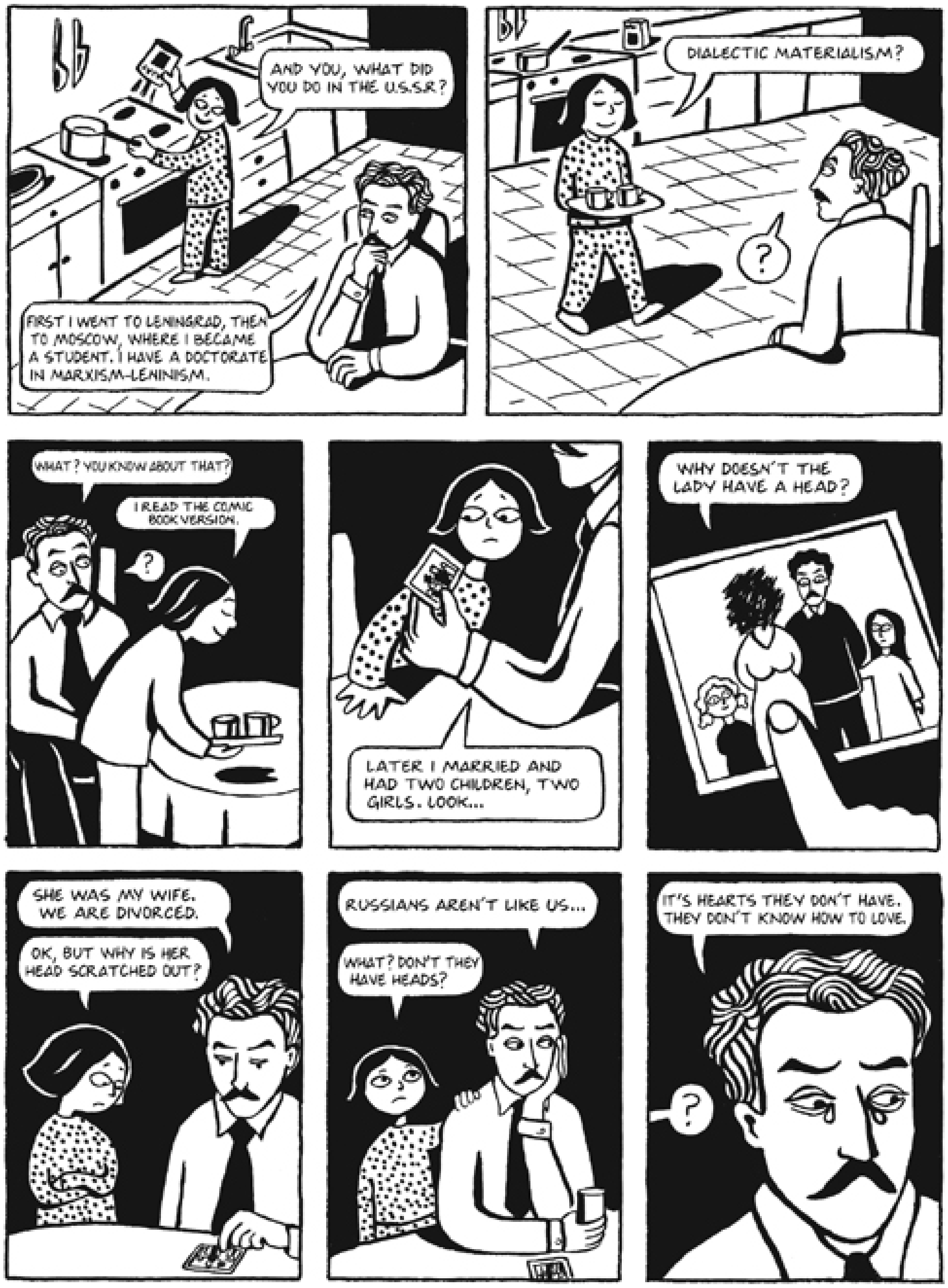

SO MY FATHER WAS NOT A HERO.
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, MARJI?
YEAH, SURE...
IF ONLY HE HAD BEEN IN PRISON.
THEY CUT MY DAD'S LEG OFF, BUT HE STILL DIDN'T CONFESS!... SO THEY CUT OFF AN ARM AS WELL.
TOO MUCH!
LUCKILY, ONE DAY THEY TOLD ME ABOUT MY UNCLE ANOOSH.
THE ONLY ONE OF MY FATHER'S BROTHERS I HAD NEVER MET. BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN IN PRISON. AND NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 30 YEARS, MY GRANDMA WAS REUNITED WITH HER SIX CHILDREN.
AND I HAD A HERO IN MY FAMILY... NATURALLY I LOVED HIM IMMEDIATELY.
WHY DON'T YOU COME AND LIVE WITH US?
SUCH A SWEET CHILD! I'LL SLEEP HERE TONIGHT AND TELL YOU STORIES.
ARE YOU MARRIED? DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? HOW OLD ARE YOU?
LATER MARJI, LATER.

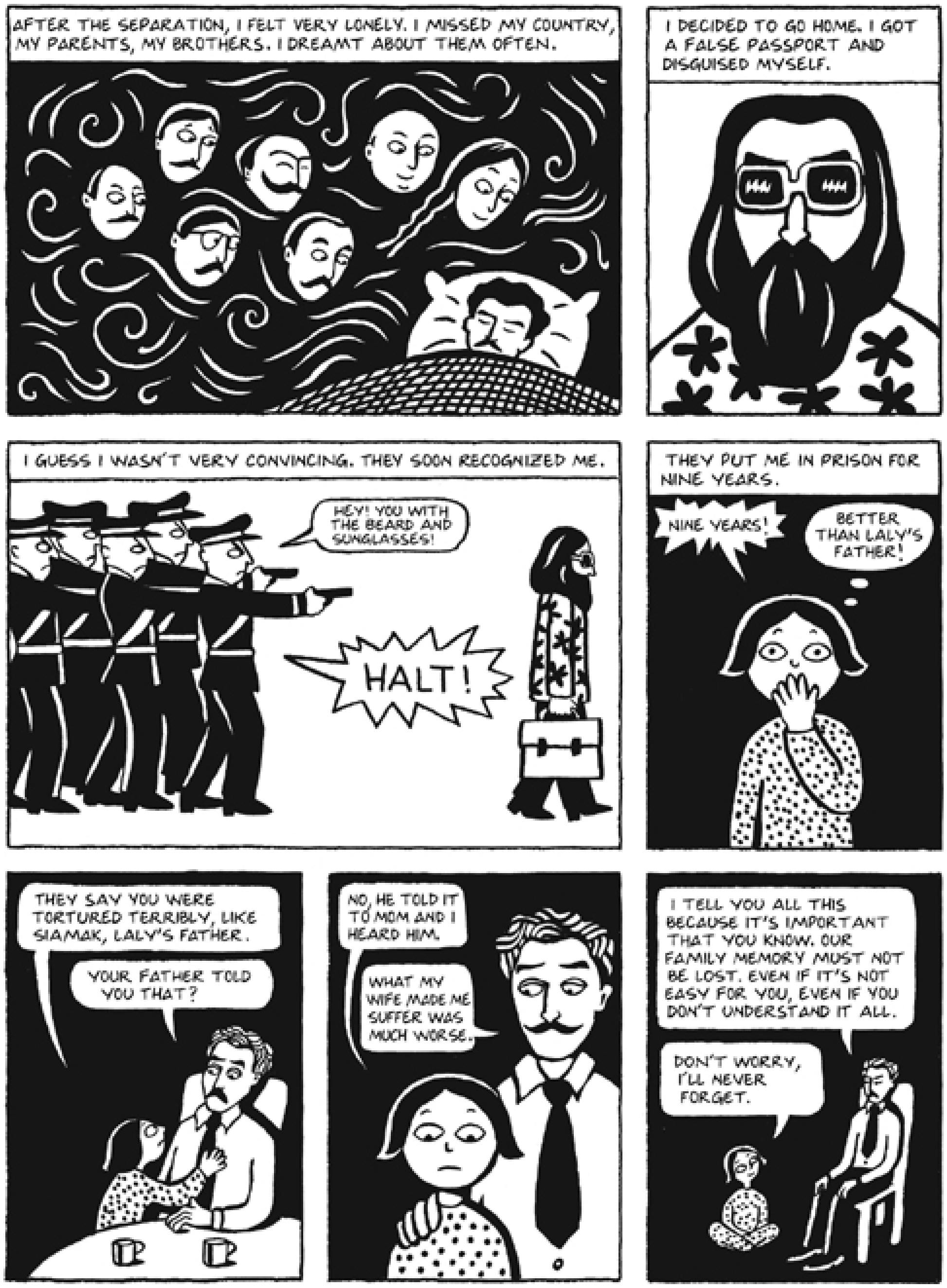

DON'T BOTHER HIM TOO MUCH, HE'S TIRED.
GOOD NIGHT.
DON'T WORRY, WE'RE FINE.
OK, HERE GOES: I WAS 18 YEARS OLD WHEN MY UNCLE FEREYDOON AND HIS FRIENDS PROCLAIMED THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE IRANIAN PROVINCE OF AZERBAIJAN...
WOW!
FEREYDOON ELECTED HIMSELF MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF THIS NEW LITTLE REPUBLIC.
GENTLEMEN, JUSTICE IS THE BASIS OF DEMOCRACY. ALL MEN SHOULD BE EQUAL IN THE EYES OF THE LAW.
MY IDEAS WERE THE SAME AS HIS BUT YOUR GRANDFATHER REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THE SHAH.
MY SON, A TRAITOR! GO AWAY AND JOIN UP WITH MY IDIOTIC BROTHER!
YOU'LL BOTH END UP BEING EXECUTED! DO YOU HEAR ME? EXECUTED!
I BECAME FEREYDOON'S SECRETARY. IT WAS A TIME OF DREAMS AND ENTHUSIASM.
AZERBAIJAN IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. WE ARE GOING TO FREE IRAN PROVINCE BY PROVINCE!!!
I'M CERTAIN YOU'RE RIGHT, UNCLE.
ONE NIGHT I HAD A TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE: DEAD PEOPLE, BLOOD...
THE NEXT MORNING, I WAS SO TORMENTED. I HAD TO SEE FEREYDOON.
SHIT! THE SHAH'S SOLDIERS!
GOOD GOD! FEREYDOON!

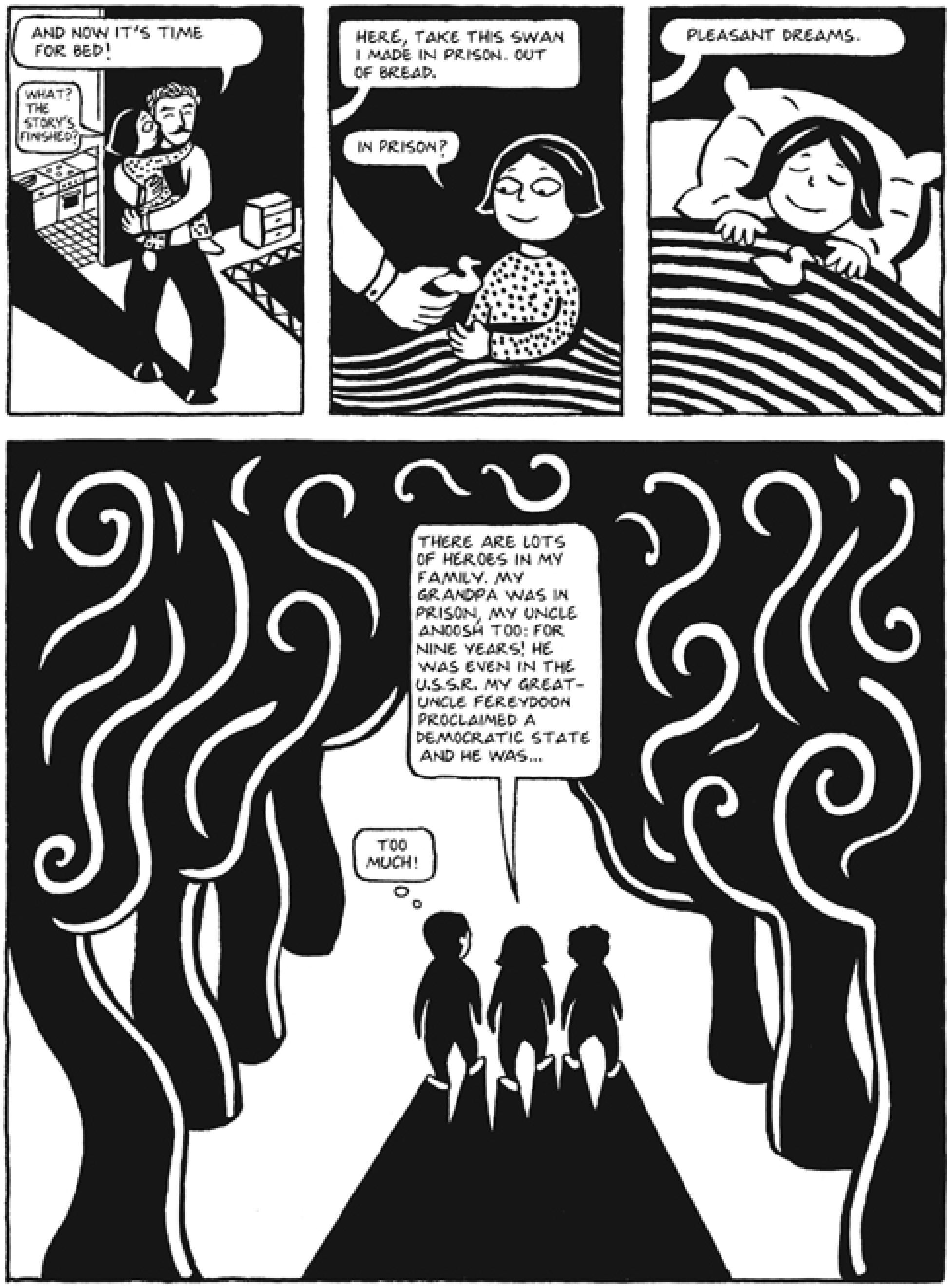

I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING... BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO...THEY ARRESTED HIM AND I RAN AWAY.
WHAT A STORY!
FOR DAYS AND DAYS I WALKED THROUGH THE FALLING SNOW. I CROSSED THE ALBORZ MOUNTAINS TO FIND REFUGE AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE IN ASTARA.
I WAS HUNGRY, I WAS COLD, BUT I CONTINUED.
I WAS NEARLY DEAD WHEN I ARRIVED.
BANG! BANG! BANG!
MY GOD! ANOOSH!!!
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO'S BOTHERING US AT THIS HOUR?
COME QUICKLY! IT'S OUR SON ANOOSH! HE HAS FAINTED!
WHAT IS HE DOING HERE? WHY DIDN'T HE STAY WITH HIS NICE UNCLE?


YOU ALWAYS SAY THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME! HELP ME NOW!
OK, OK, CALM DOWN!
OH MY GOD... MY SON, MY DEAR SON...
IT'S A BIT LATE TO SHOW YOUR AFFECTION!!!
BUT THE SHAH'S POLICE WERE LOOKING FOR ME. I WAS NOT SAFE WITH MY PARENTS. SO I DECIDED TO GO INTO EXILE.
I SWAM ACROSS THE ARAS RIVER AND ARRIVED IN THE U.S.S.R.
HOLY SMOKE! LALY'S DAD HASN'T EVEN BEEN TO THE U.S.S.R.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR UNCLE FEREYDOON?
HE MET HIS DESTINY...
I LEARNED THAT HE KNEW THE SHAH'S ARMY WAS COMING TO ARREST HIM. HE COULD HAVE RUN AWAY LIKE MOST OF HIS FRIENDS DID. BUT HE DECIDED TO STAY.
ALL IS LOST. I AM AT YOUR MERCY, GENTLEMEN.

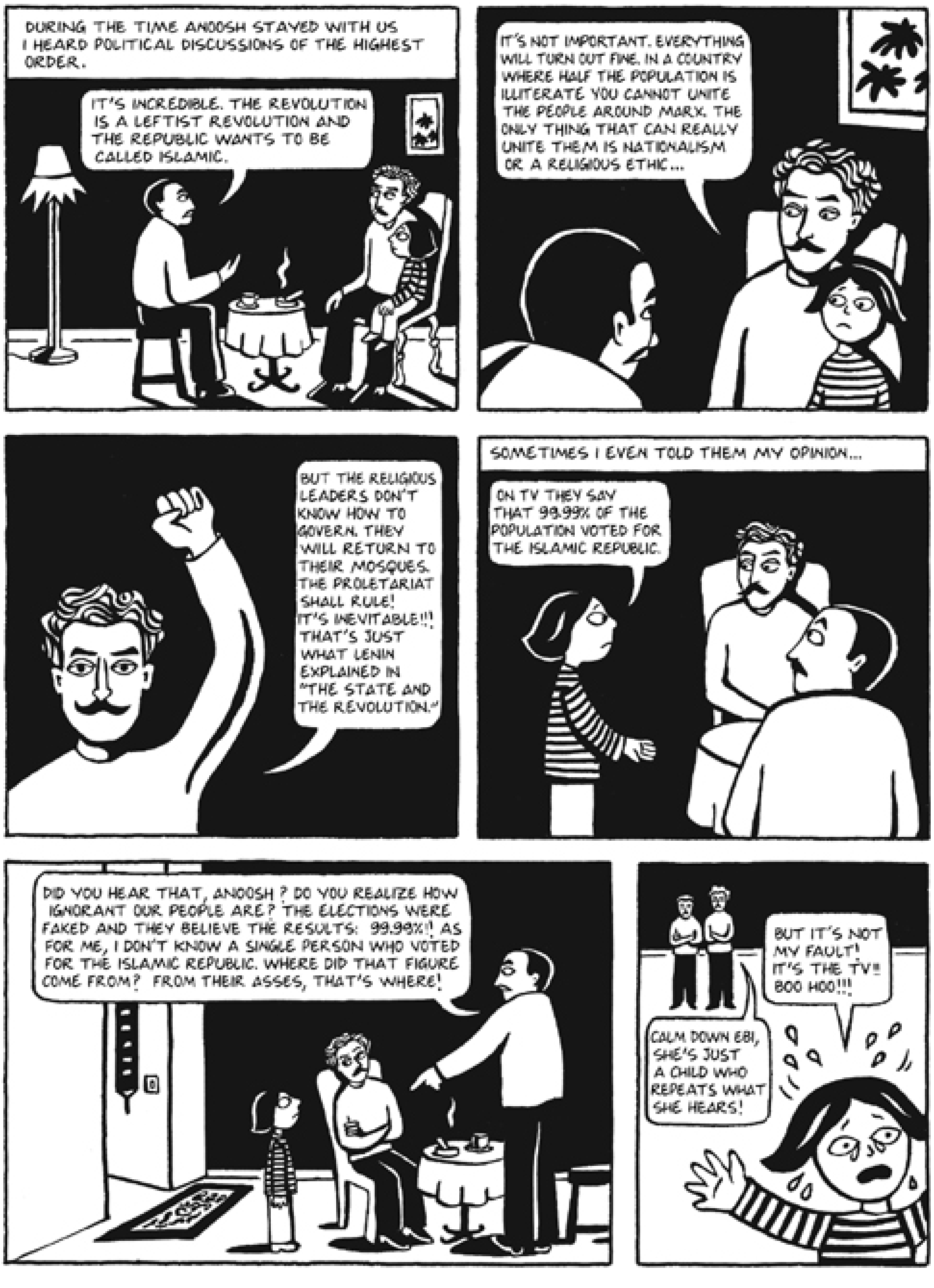

AT THE TIME HE HAD A GIRLFRIEND WHO WAS INVOLVED IN HIS POLITICAL MOVEMENT. A GIRL FROM A GOOD FAMILY.
FEREYDOON, YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
MY LOVE...
MY DARLING, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME, YOU ARE MAKING IT WORSE FOR YOURSELF.
LET'S MAKE A CHILD.
?
HERE? RIGHT NOW?
YES, I PAID THE GUARD. HE WON'T BOTHER US.
I AM GOING TO BE EXECUTED TOMORROW.
I KNOW, I WANT A LIVING MEMORY OF YOU.
YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE AN UNMARRIED MOTHER IN THIS COUNTRY. YOU WILL BE SHUNNED. LIFE WILL BE HELL.
I DON'T CARE. LET'S MAKE A CHILD.
SHE BECAME PREGNANT THAT VERY NIGHT AND LEFT FOR SWITZERLAND SOON AFTER. I KNOW THAT SHE HAD A SON. I HEARD HE LOOKS A LOT LIKE HIS FATHER.
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
EHH...DO YOU HAVE OTHER STORIES LIKE THAT?
...? YES.
I'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CHOCOLATE.

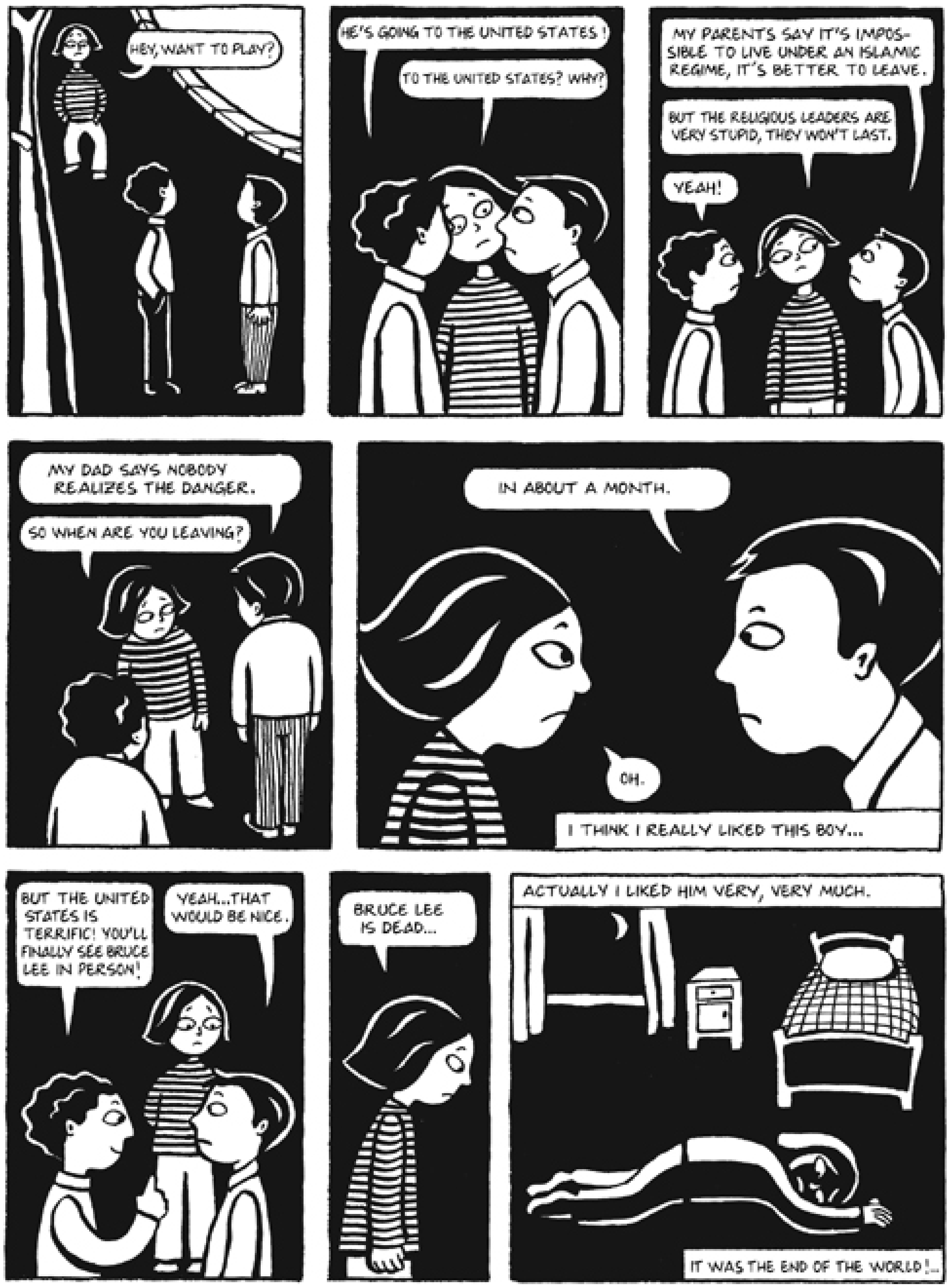

AND YOU, WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE U.S.S.R?
FIRST I WENT TO LENINGRAD, THEN TO MOSCOW, WHERE I BECAME A STUDENT. I HAVE A DOCTORATE IN MARXISM-LENINISM.
DIALECTIC MATERIALISM?
?
WHAT? YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?
I READ THE COMIC BOOK VERSION.
?
LATER I MARRIED AND HAD TWO CHILDREN, TWO GIRLS. LOOK...
WHY DOESN'T THE LADY HAVE A HEAD?
SHE WAS MY WIFE. WE ARE DIVORCED.
OK, BUT WHY IS HER HEAD SCRATCHED OUT?
RUSSIANS AREN'T LIKE US...
WHAT? DON'T THEY HAVE HEADS?
IT'S HEARTS THEY DON'T HAVE. THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO LOVE.
?

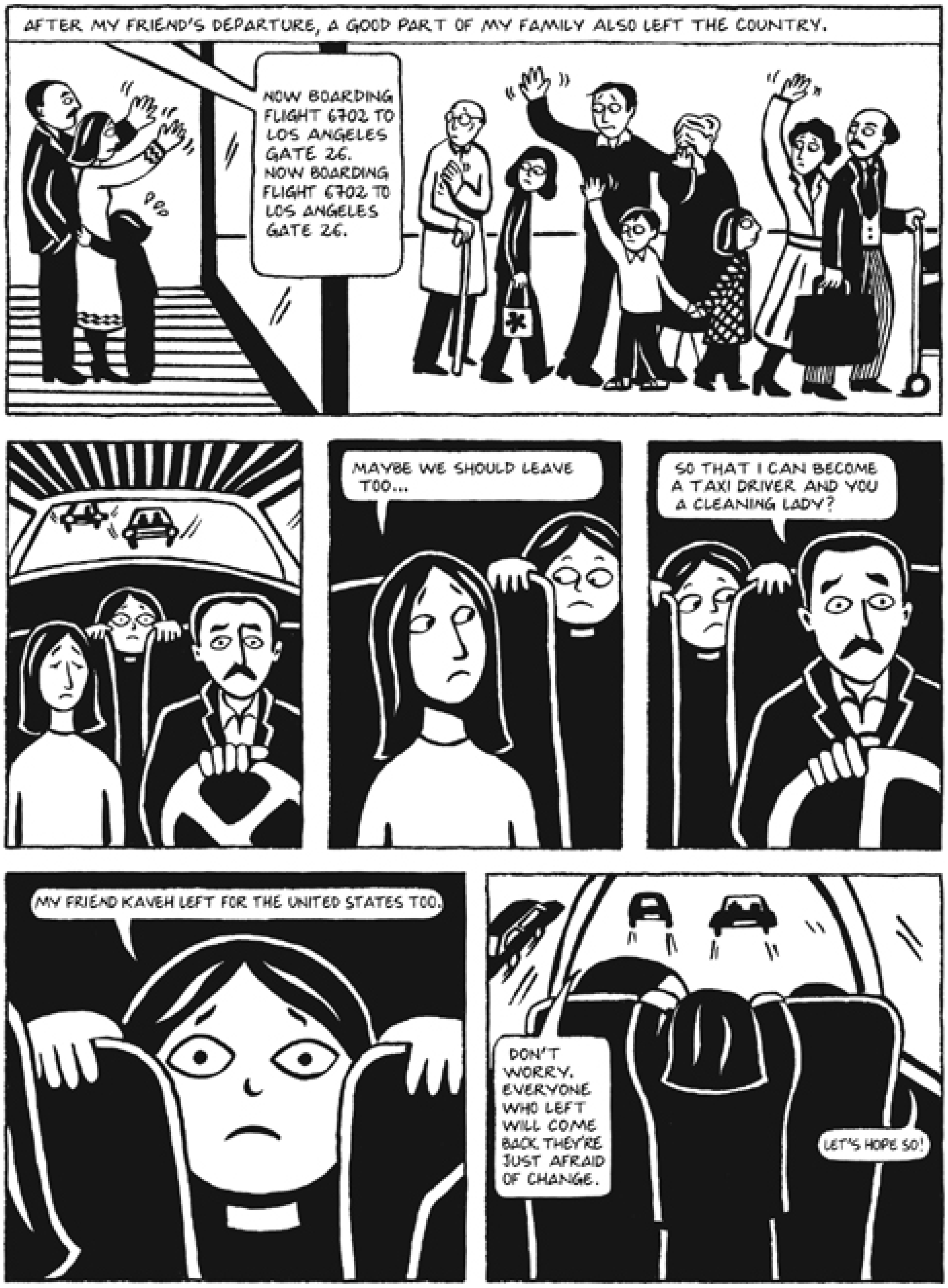

AFTER THE SEPARATION, I FELT VERY LONELY. I MISSED MY COUNTRY, MY PARENTS, MY BROTHERS. I DREAMT ABOUT THEM OFTEN.
I DECIDED TO GO HOME. I GOT A FALSE PASSPORT AND DISGUISED MYSELF.
I GUESS I WASN'T VERY CONVINCING. THEY SOON RECOGNIZED ME.
HEY! YOU WITH THE BEARD AND SUNGLASSES!
HALT!
THEY PUT ME IN PRISON FOR NINE YEARS.
NINE YEARS!
BETTER THAN LALY'S FATHER!
THEY SAY YOU WERE TORTURED TERRIBLY, LIKE SIAMAK, LALY'S FATHER.
YOUR FATHER TOLD YOU THAT?
NO, HE TOLD IT TO MOM AND I HEARD HIM.
WHAT MY WIFE MADE ME SUFFER WAS MUCH WORSE.
I TELL YOU ALL THIS BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW. OUR FAMILY MEMORY MUST NOT BE LOST. EVEN IF IT'S NOT EASY FOR YOU, EVEN IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT ALL.
DON'T WORRY, I'LL NEVER FORGET.

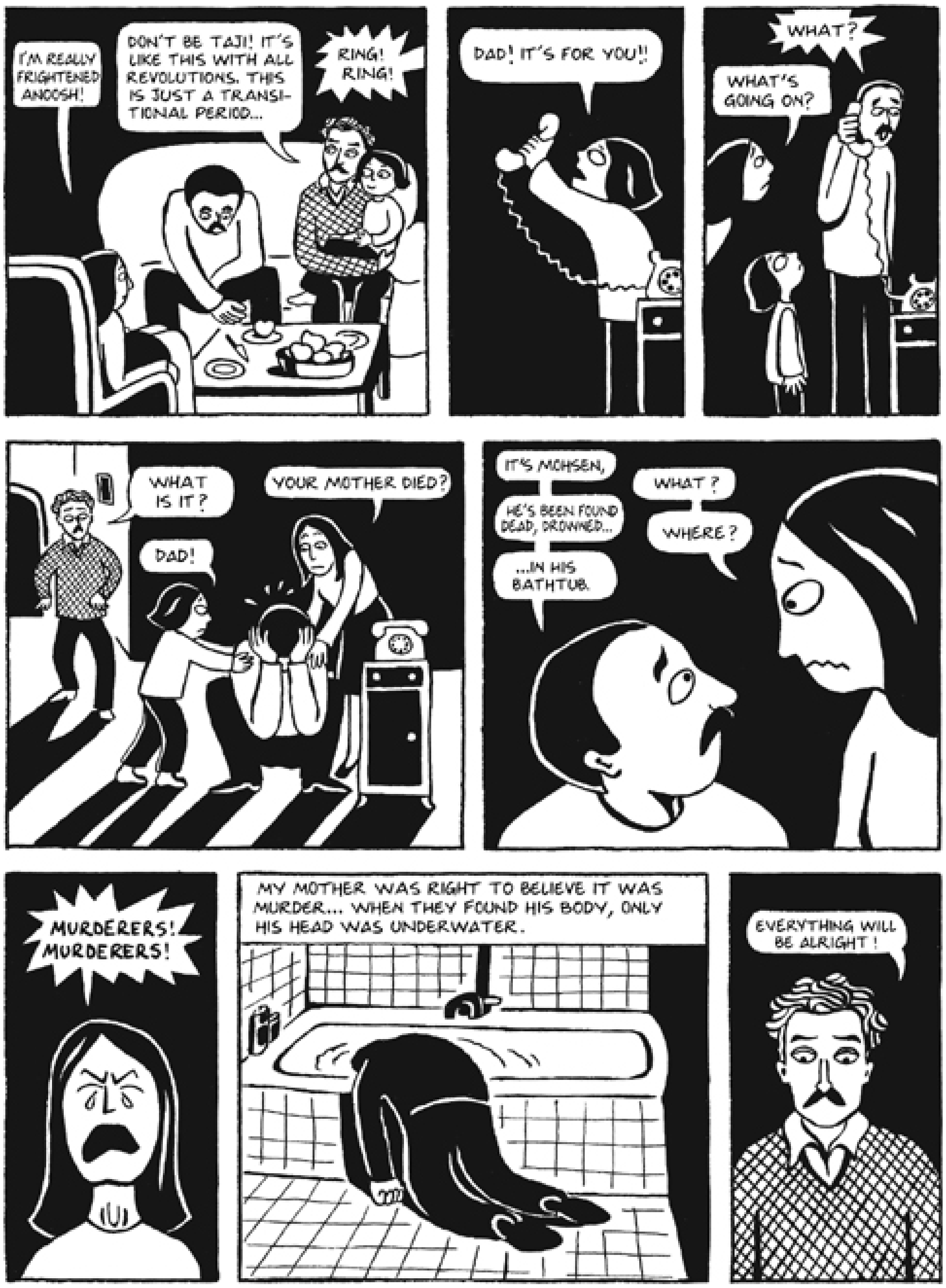

AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR BED!
WHAT? THE STORY'S FINISHED?
HERE, TAKE THIS SWAN I MADE IN PRISON. OUT OF BREAD.
IN PRISON?
PLEASANT DREAMS.
THERE ARE LOTS OF HEROES IN MY FAMILY. MY GRANDPA WAS IN PRISON, MY UNCLE ANOOSH TOO: FOR NINE YEARS! HE WAS EVEN IN THE U.S.S.R. MY GREAT-UNCLE FEREYDOON PROCLAIMED A DEMOCRATIC STATE AND HE WAS...
TOO MUCH!

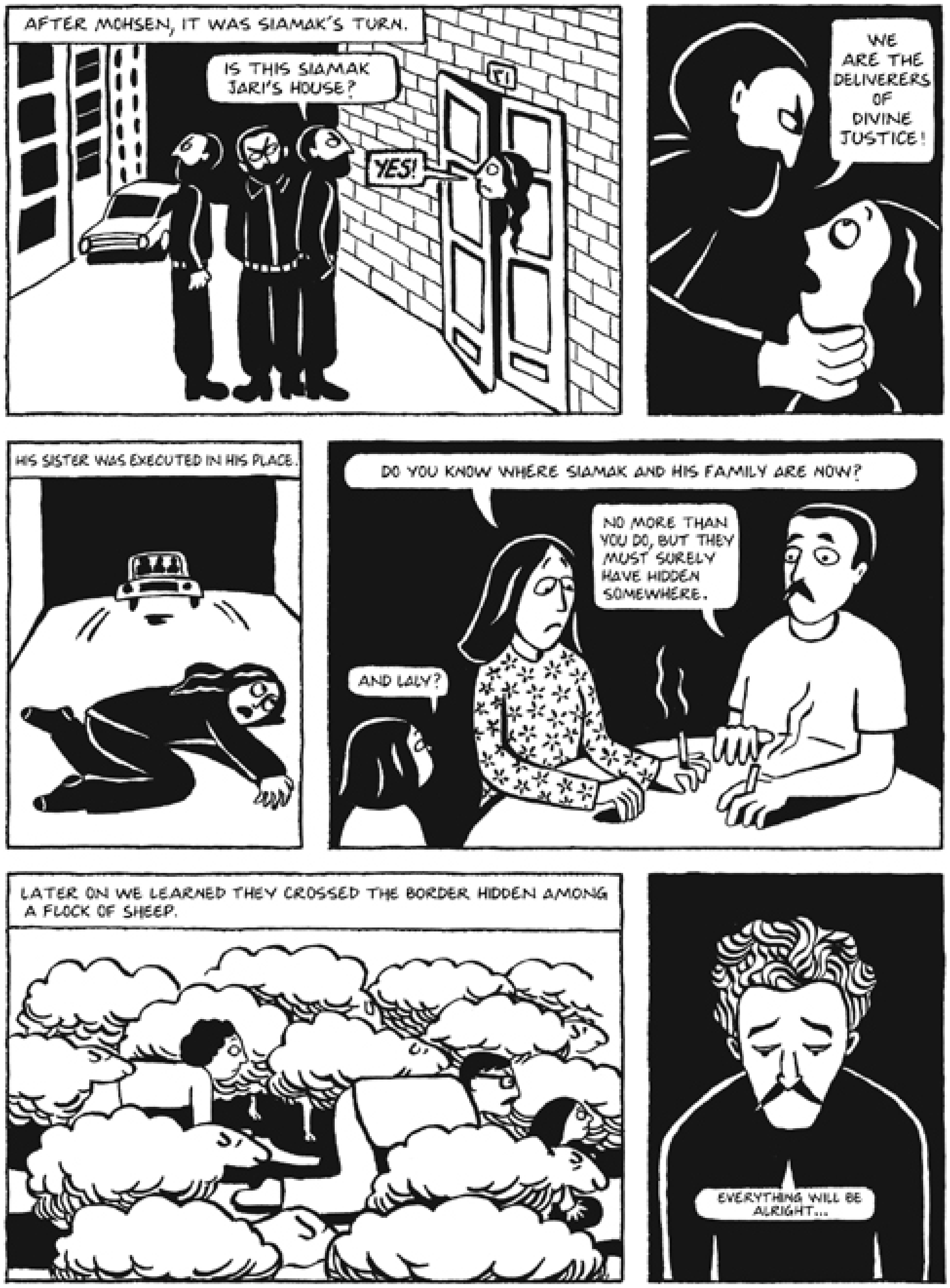
# THE SHEEP

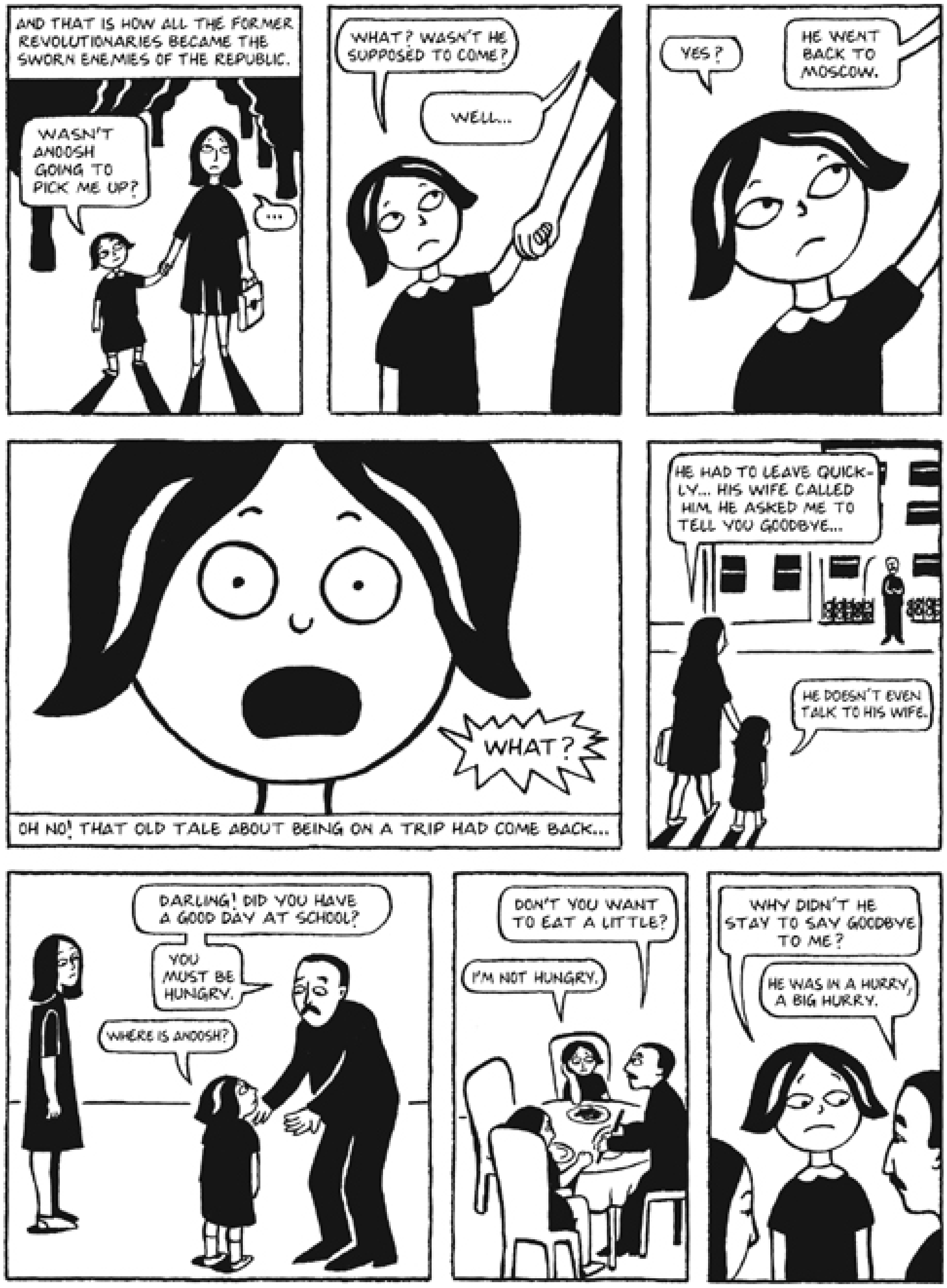

DURING THE TIME ANOOSH STAYED WITH US I HEARD POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.
IT'S INCREDIBLE. THE REVOLUTION IS A LEFTIST REVOLUTION AND THE REPUBLIC WANTS TO BE CALLED ISLAMIC.
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. EVERYTHING WILL TURN OUT FINE. IN A COUNTRY WHERE HALF THE POPULATION IS ILLITERATE YOU CANNOT UNITE THE PEOPLE AROUND MARX. THE ONLY THING THAT CAN REALLY UNITE THEM IS NATIONALISM OR A RELIGIOUS ETHIC...
BUT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS DON'T KNOW HOW TO GOVERN. THEY WILL RETURN TO THEIR MOSQUES. THE PROLETARIAT SHALL RULE! IT'S INEVITABLE!! THAT'S JUST WHAT LENIN EXPLAINED IN "THE STATE AND THE REVOLUTION."
SOMETIMES I EVEN TOLD THEM MY OPINION...
ON TV THEY SAY THAT 99.99% OF THE POPULATION VOTED FOR THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, ANOOSH ? DO YOU REALIZE HOW IGNORANT OUR PEOPLE ARE? THE ELECTIONS WERE FAKED AND THEY BELIEVE THE RESULTS: 99.99%!! AS FOR ME, I DON'T KNOW A SINGLE PERSON WHO VOTED FOR THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC. WHERE DID THAT FIGURE COME FROM? FROM THEIR ASSES, THAT'S WHERE!
CALM DOWN EBI, SHE'S JUST A CHILD WHO REPEATS WHAT SHE HEARS!
BUT IT'S NOT MY FAULT! IT'S THE TV!! BOO HOO!!!

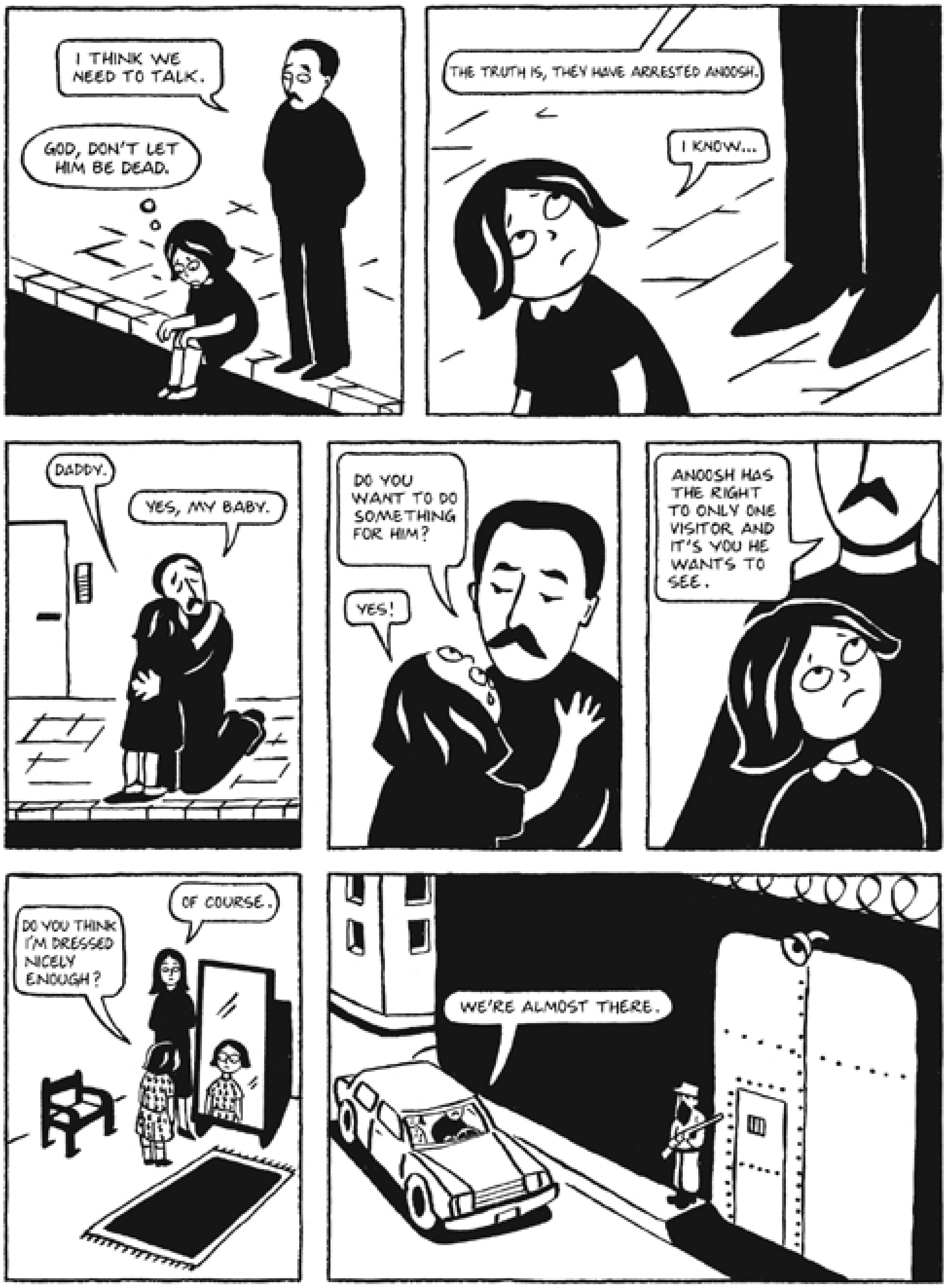

HEY, WANT TO PLAY?
HE'S GOING TO THE UNITED STATES!
TO THE UNITED STATES? WHY?
MY PARENTS SAY IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LIVE UNDER AN ISLAMIC REGIME, IT'S BETTER TO LEAVE.
BUT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE VERY STUPID, THEY WON'T LAST.
YEAH!
MY DAD SAYS NOBODY REALIZES THE DANGER.
SO WHEN ARE YOU LEAVING?
IN ABOUT A MONTH.
OH.
I THINK I REALLY LIKED THIS BOY...
BUT THE UNITED STATES IS TERRIFIC! YOU'LL FINALLY SEE BRUCE LEE IN PERSON!
YEAH...THAT WOULD BE NICE.
BRUCE LEE IS DEAD...
ACTUALLY I LIKED HIM VERY, VERY MUCH.
IT WAS THE END OF THE WORLD!...

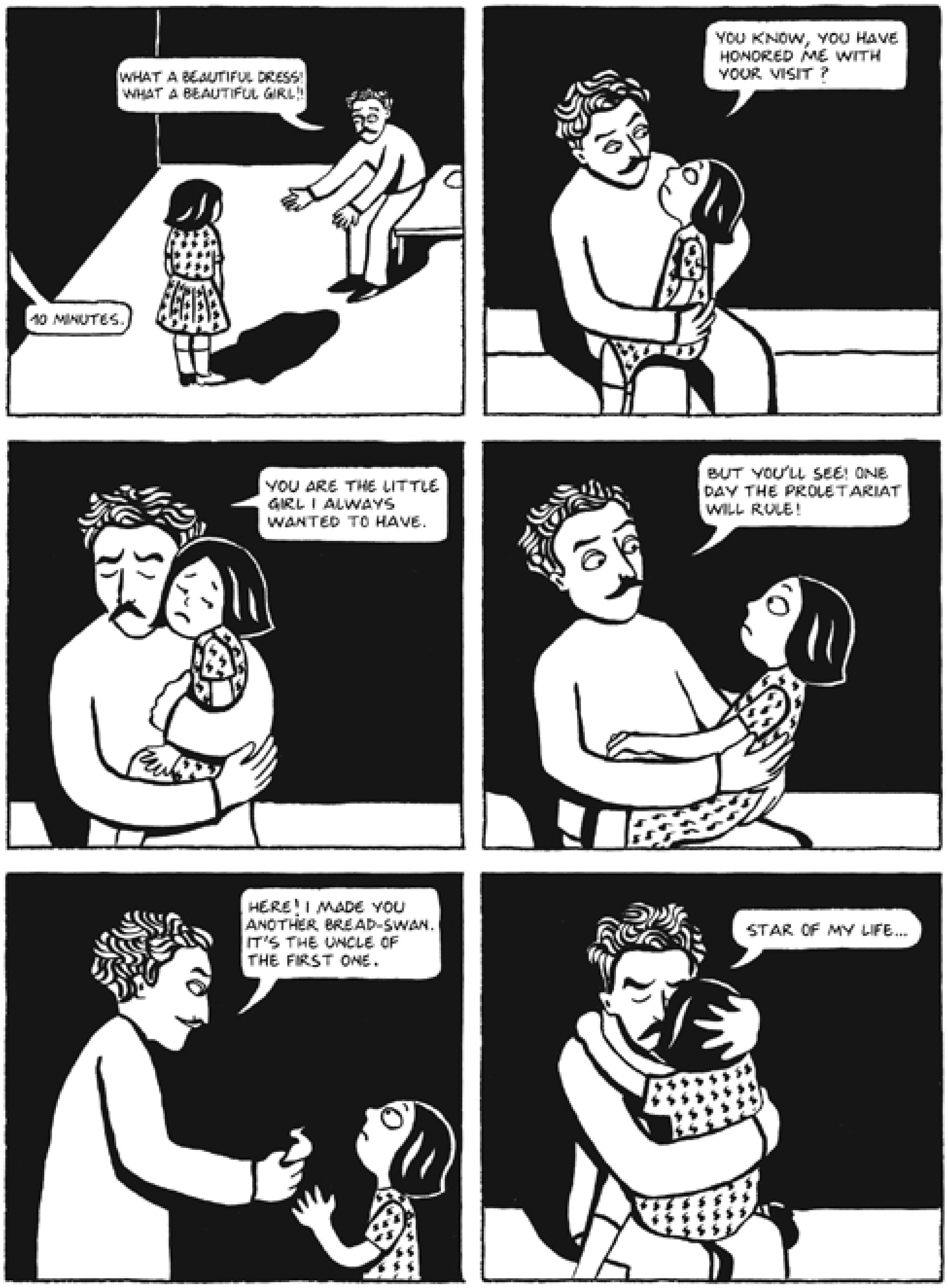

AFTER MY FRIEND'S DEPARTURE, A GOOD PART OF MY FAMILY ALSO LEFT THE COUNTRY.
NOW BOARDING FLIGHT 6702 TO LOS ANGELES GATE 26. NOW BOARDING FLIGHT 6702 TO LOS ANGELES GATE 26.
MAYBE WE SHOULD LEAVE TOO...
SO THAT I CAN BECOME A TAXI DRIVER AND YOU A CLEANING LADY?
MY FRIEND KAVEH LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES TOO.
DON'T WORRY. EVERYONE WHO LEFT WILL COME BACK. THEY'RE JUST AFRAID OF CHANGE.
LET'S HOPE SO!


I'M REALLY FRIGHTENED ANOOSH!
DON'T BE TAJI! IT'S LIKE THIS WITH ALL REVOLUTIONS. THIS IS JUST A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD...
RING! RING!
DAD! IT'S FOR YOU!!
WHAT?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT IS IT?
YOUR MOTHER DIED?
DAD!
IT'S MOHSEN,
HE'S BEEN FOUND DEAD, DROWNED...
...IN HIS BATHTUB.
WHAT ?
WHERE ?
MURDERERS! MURDERERS!
MY MOTHER WAS RIGHT TO BELIEVE IT WAS MURDER... WHEN THEY FOUND HIS BODY, ONLY HIS HEAD WAS UNDERWATER.
EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT !

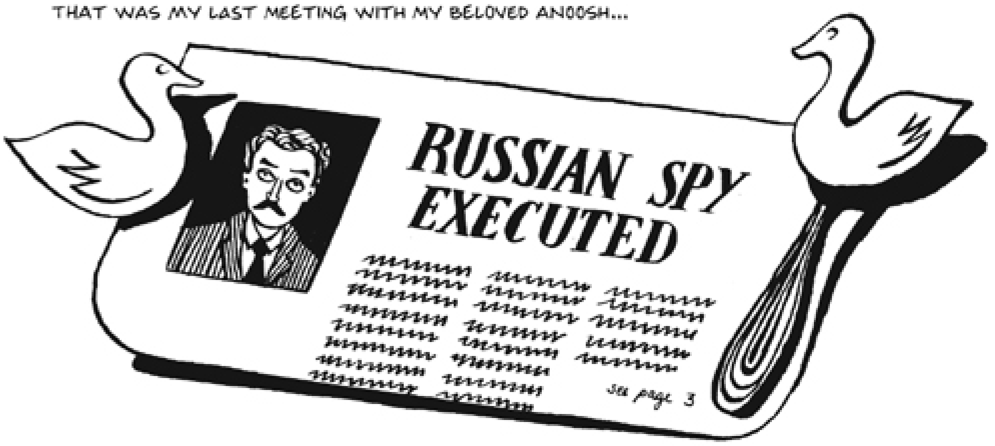

AFTER MOHSEN, IT WAS SIAMAK'S TURN.
IS THIS SIAMAK JARI'S HOUSE?
YES!
WE ARE THE DELIVERERS OF DIVINE JUSTICE!
HIS SISTER WAS EXECUTED IN HIS PLACE.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE SIAMAK AND HIS FAMILY ARE NOW?
NO MORE THAN YOU DO, BUT THEY MUST SURELY HAVE HIDDEN SOMEWHERE.
AND LALY?
LATER ON WE LEARNED THEY CROSSED THE BORDER HIDDEN AMONG A FLOCK OF SHEEP.
EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT...

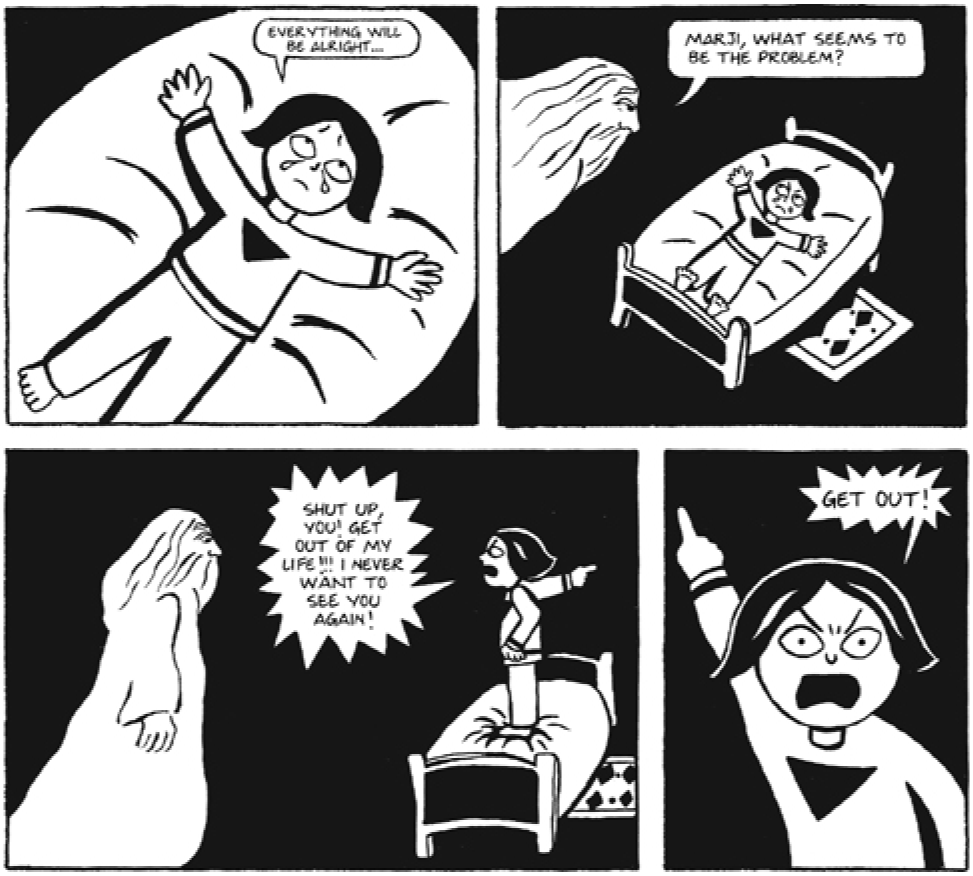

AND THAT IS HOW ALL THE FORMER REVOLUTIONARIES BECAME THE SWORN ENEMIES OF THE REPUBLIC.
WASN'T ANOOSH GOING TO PICK ME UP?
...
WHAT? WASN'T HE SUPPOSED TO COME?
WELL...
YES?
HE WENT BACK TO MOSCOW.
WHAT?
OH NO! THAT OLD TALE ABOUT BEING ON A TRIP HAD COME BACK...
HE HAD TO LEAVE QUICKLY... HIS WIFE CALLED HIM. HE ASKED ME TO TELL YOU GOODBYE...
HE DOESN'T EVEN TALK TO HIS WIFE.
DARLING! DID YOU HAVE A GOOD DAY AT SCHOOL?
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.
WHERE IS ANOOSH?
DON'T YOU WANT TO EAT A LITTLE?
I'M NOT HUNGRY.
WHY DIDN'T HE STAY TO SAY GOODBYE TO ME?
HE WAS IN A HURRY, A BIG HURRY.

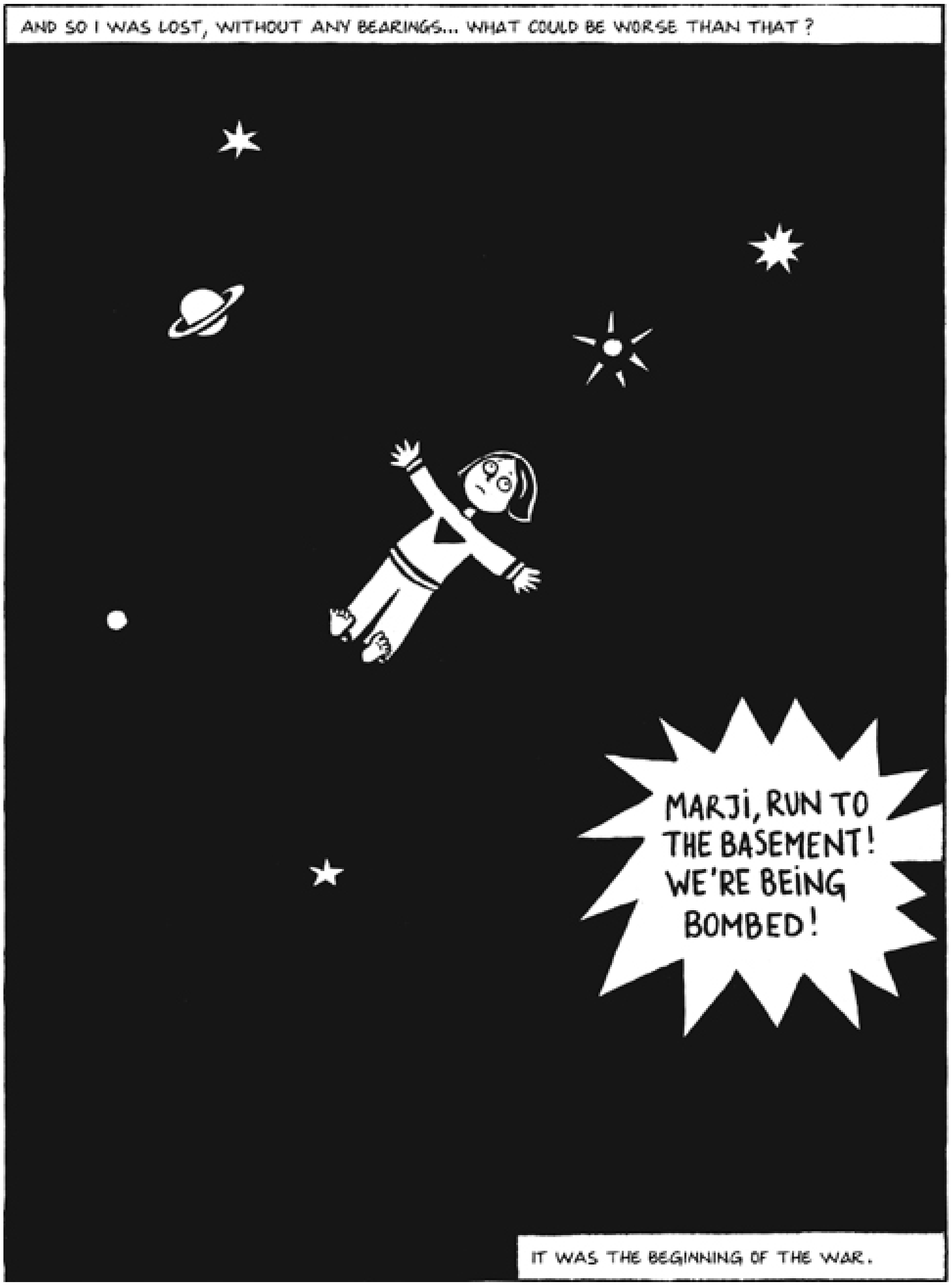

I THINK WE NEED TO TALK.
GOD, DON'T LET HIM BE DEAD.
THE TRUTH IS, THEY HAVE ARRESTED ANOOSH.
I KNOW...
DADDY.
YES, MY BABY.
DO YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR HIM?
YES!
ANOOSH HAS THE RIGHT TO ONLY ONE VISITOR AND IT'S YOU HE WANTS TO SEE.
DO YOU THINK I'M DRESSED NICELY ENOUGH?
OF COURSE.
WE'RE ALMOST THERE.


WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DRESS! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL GIRL!!
10 MINUTES.
YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE HONORED ME WITH YOUR VISIT ?
YOU ARE THE LITTLE GIRL I ALWAYS WANTED TO HAVE.
BUT YOU'LL SEE! ONE DAY THE PROLETARIAT WILL RULE!
HERE! I MADE YOU ANOTHER BREAD-SWAN. IT'S THE UNCLE OF THE FIRST ONE.
STAR OF MY LIFE...

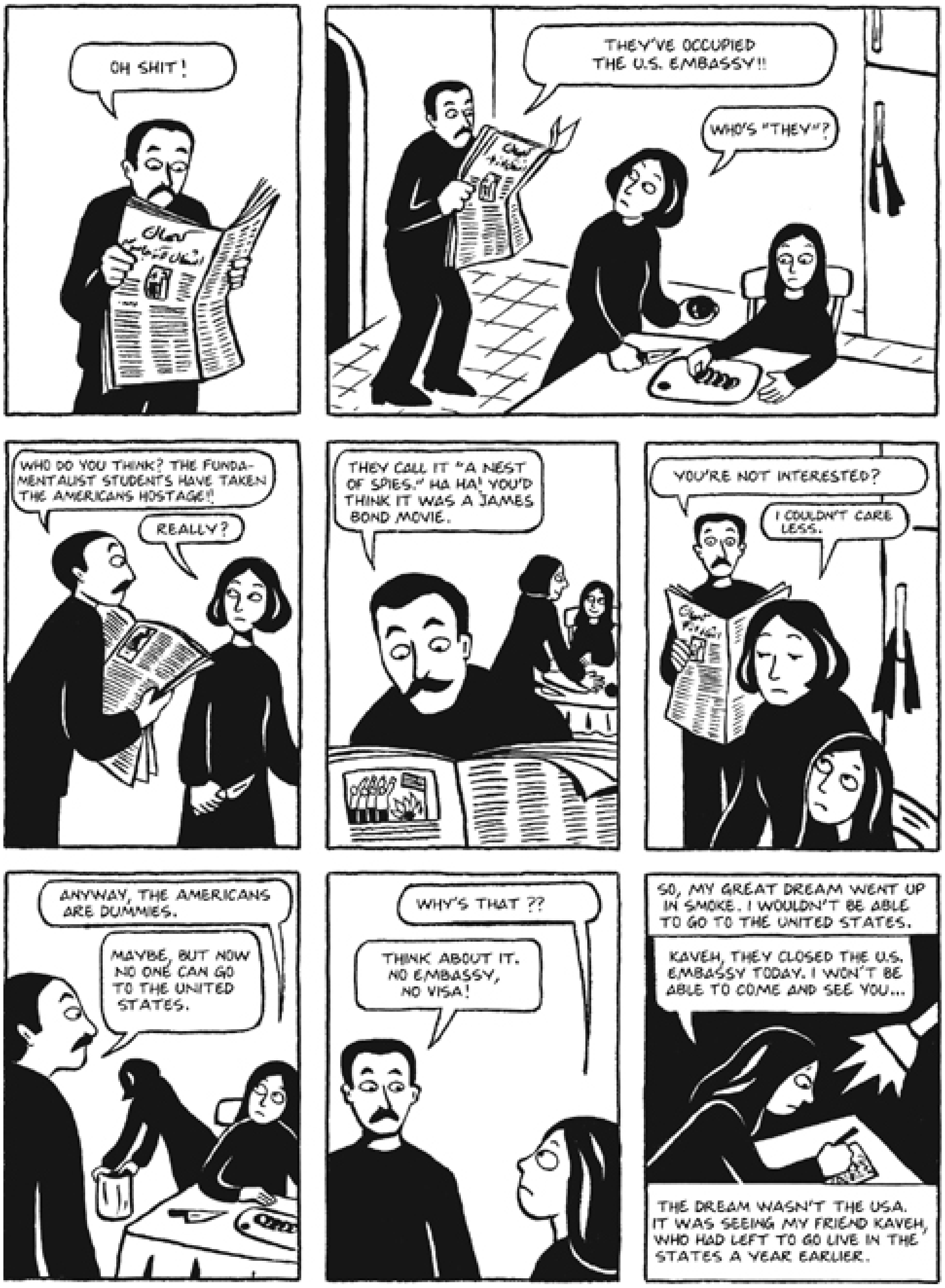
THAT WAS MY LAST MEETING WITH MY BELOVED ANOOSH...

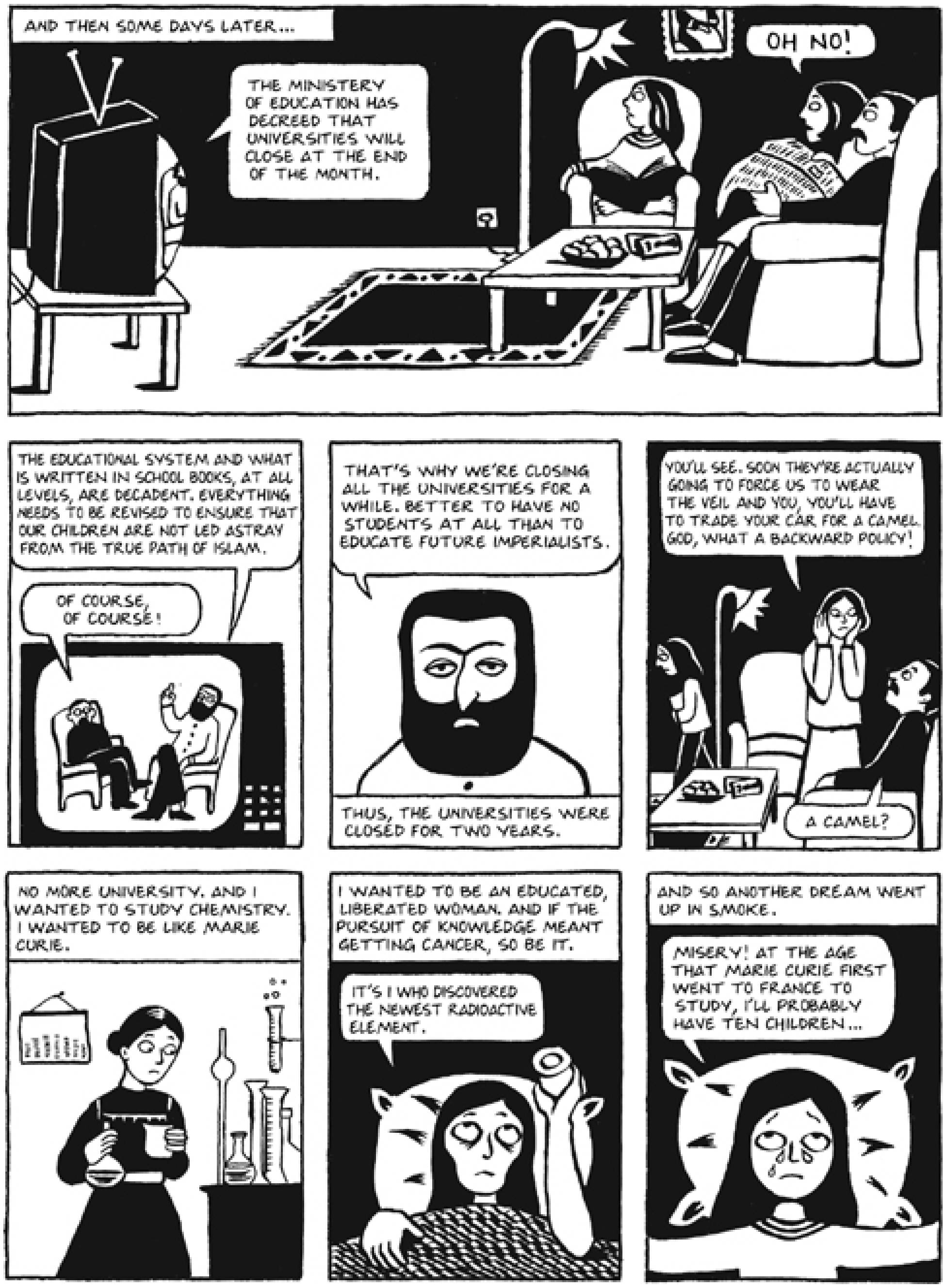

RUSSIAN SPY EXECUTED
see page 3

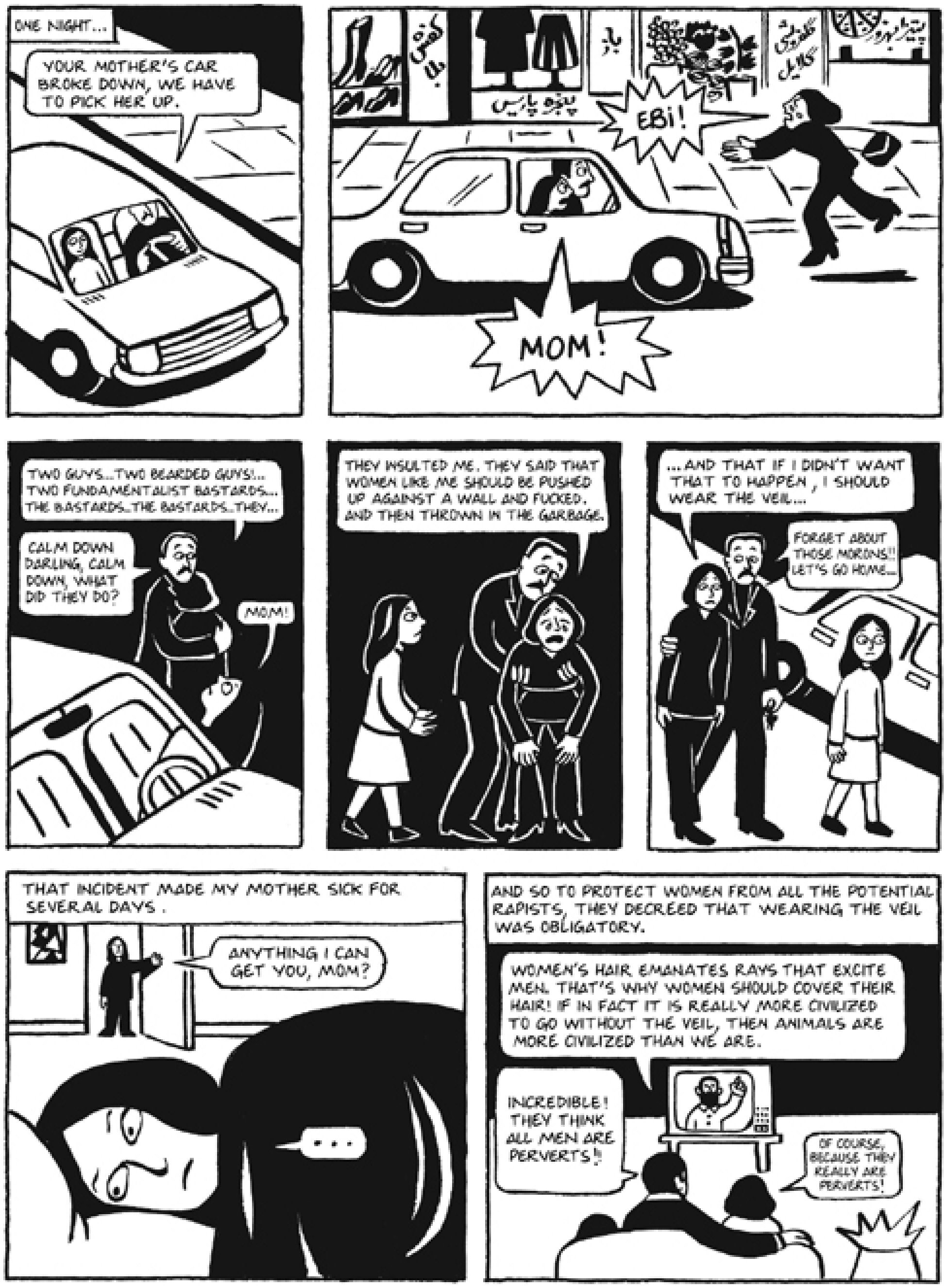

EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT...
MARJI, WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?
SHUT UP, YOU! GET OUT OF MY LIFE!!! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
GET OUT!

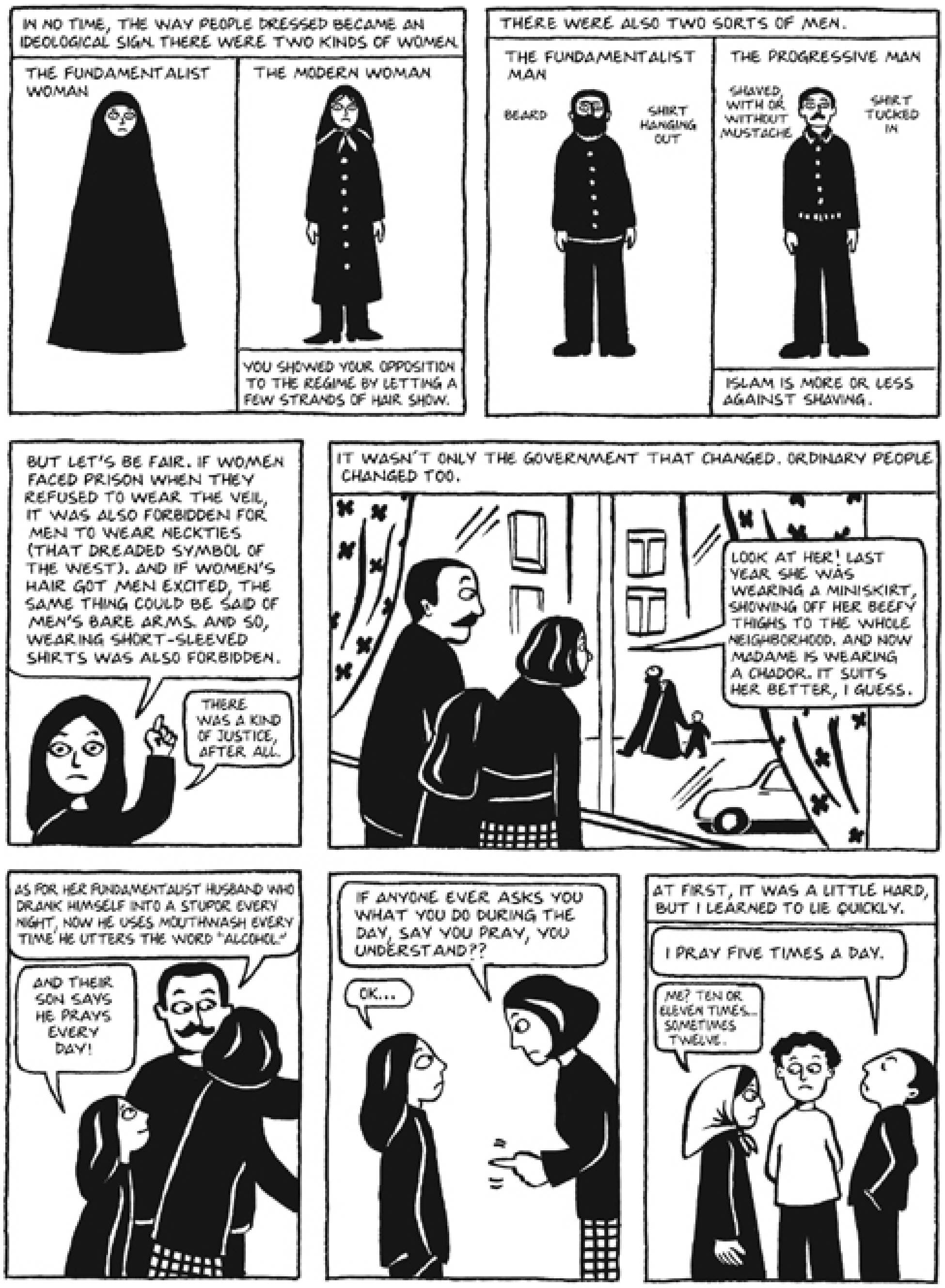

AND SO I WAS LOST, WITHOUT ANY BEARINGS... WHAT COULD BE WORSE THAN THAT ?
MARJi, RUN TO THE BASEMENT! WE'RE BEiNG BOMBED!
IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

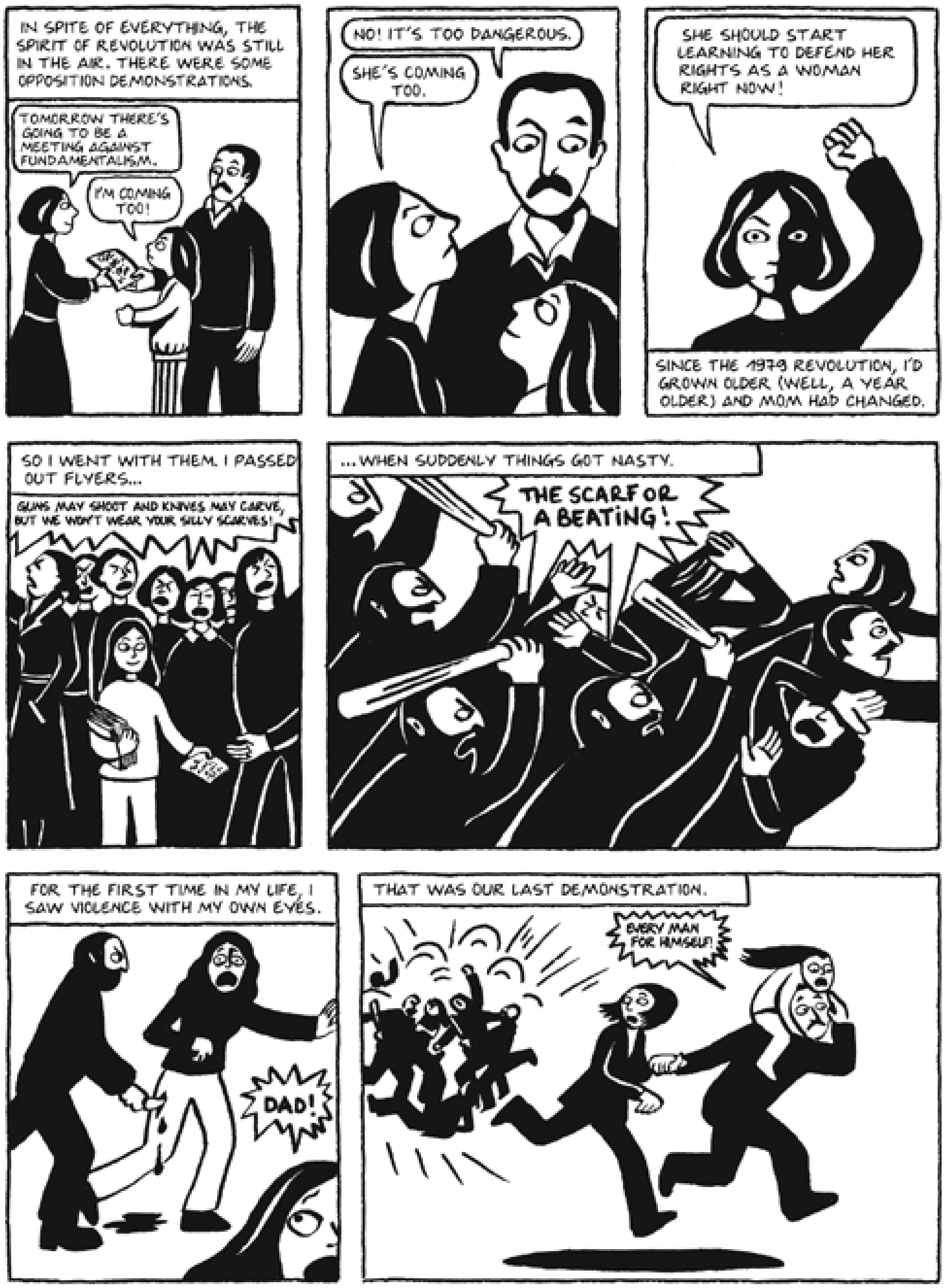
# THE TRIP

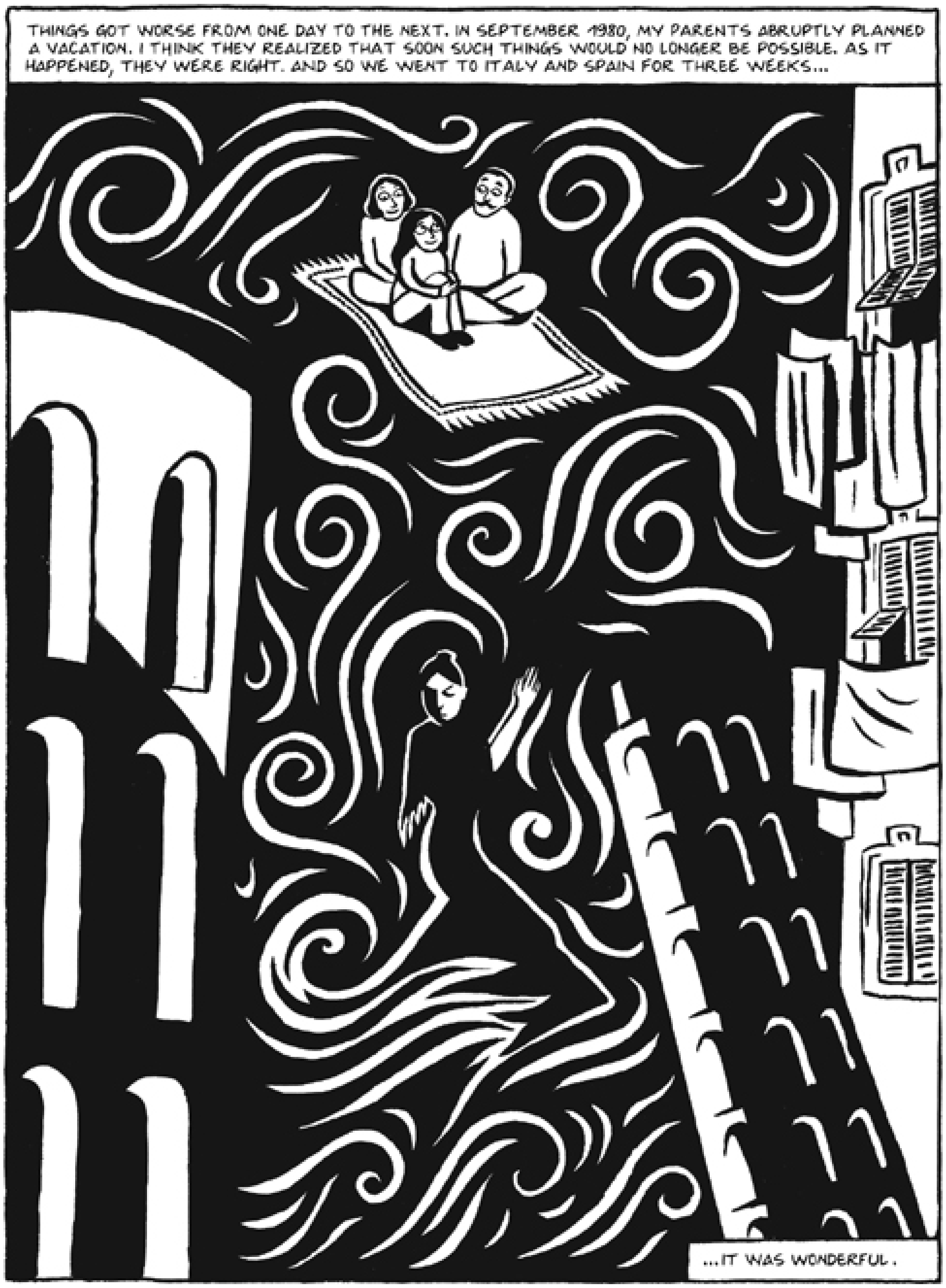

OH SHIT!
THEY'VE OCCUPIED THE U.S. EMBASSY!!
WHO'S "THEY"?
WHO DO YOU THINK? THE FUNDAMENTALIST STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN THE AMERICANS HOSTAGE!!
REALLY?
THEY CALL IT "A NEST OF SPIES." HA HA! YOU'D THINK IT WAS A JAMES BOND MOVIE.
YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED?
I COULDN'T CARE LESS.
ANYWAY, THE AMERICANS ARE DUMMIES.
MAYBE, BUT NOW NO ONE CAN GO TO THE UNITED STATES.
WHY'S THAT ??
THINK ABOUT IT. NO EMBASSY, NO VISA!
SO, MY GREAT DREAM WENT UP IN SMOKE. I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES.
KAVEH, THEY CLOSED THE U.S. EMBASSY TODAY. I WON'T BE ABLE TO COME AND SEE YOU...
THE DREAM WASN'T THE USA. IT WAS SEEING MY FRIEND KAVEH, WHO HAD LEFT TO GO LIVE IN THE STATES A YEAR EARLIER.

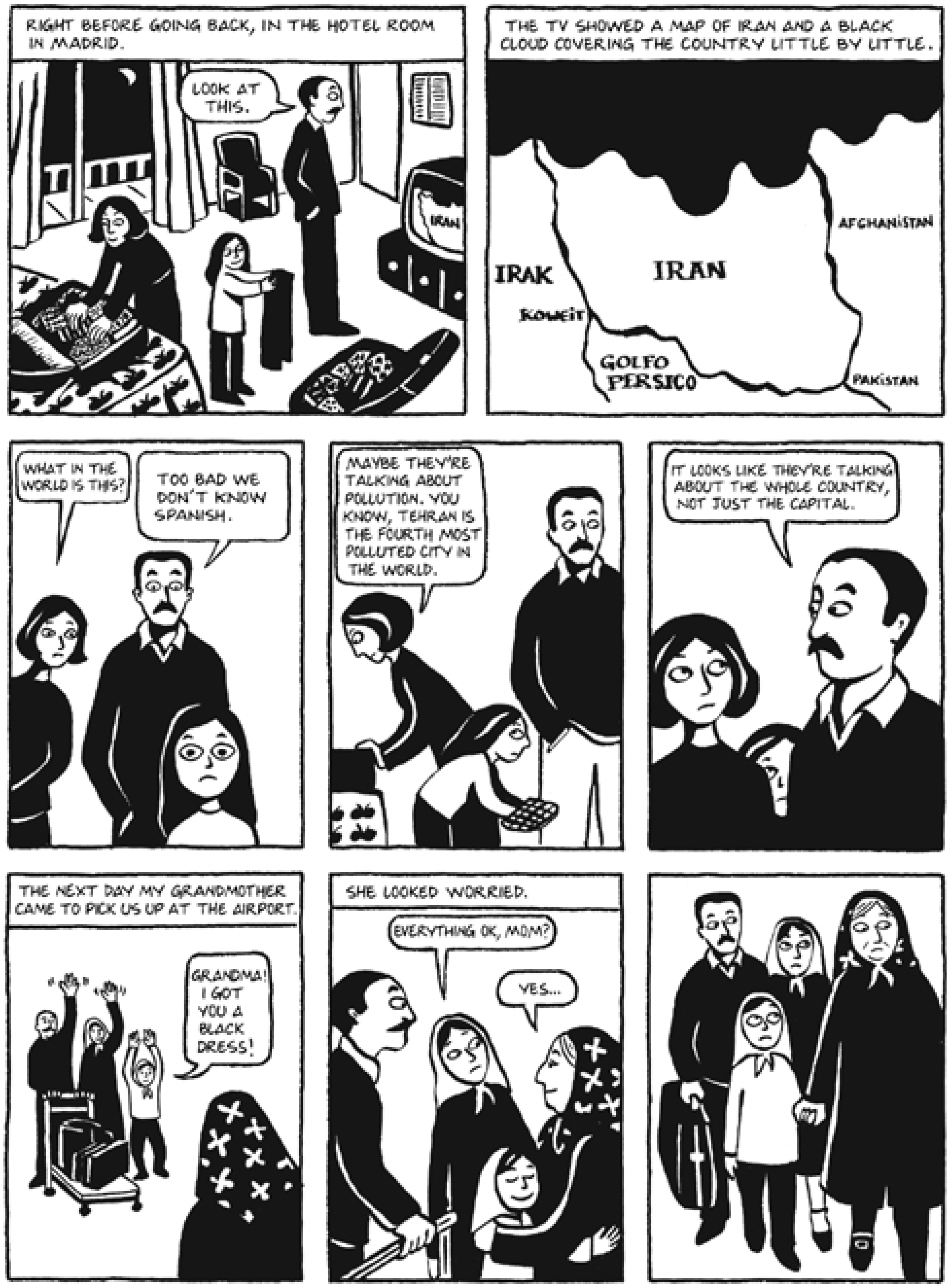

AND THEN SOME DAYS LATER...
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS DECREED THAT UNIVERSITIES WILL CLOSE AT THE END OF THE MONTH.
OH NO!
THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND WHAT IS WRITTEN IN SCHOOL BOOKS, AT ALL LEVELS, ARE DECADENT. EVERYTHING NEEDS TO BE REVISED TO ENSURE THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE NOT LED ASTRAY FROM THE TRUE PATH OF ISLAM.
OF COURSE, OF COURSE!
THAT'S WHY WE'RE CLOSING ALL THE UNIVERSITIES FOR A WHILE. BETTER TO HAVE NO STUDENTS AT ALL THAN TO EDUCATE FUTURE IMPERIALISTS.
THUS, THE UNIVERSITIES WERE CLOSED FOR TWO YEARS.
YOU'LL SEE. SOON THEY'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO FORCE US TO WEAR THE VEIL AND YOU, YOU'LL HAVE TO TRADE YOUR CAR FOR A CAMEL. GOD, WHAT A BACKWARD POLICY!
A CAMEL?
NO MORE UNIVERSITY. AND I WANTED TO STUDY CHEMISTRY. I WANTED TO BE LIKE MARIE CURIE.
I WANTED TO BE AN EDUCATED, LIBERATED WOMAN. AND IF THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE MEANT GETTING CANCER, SO BE IT.
IT'S I WHO DISCOVERED THE NEWEST RADIOACTIVE ELEMENT.
AND SO ANOTHER DREAM WENT UP IN SMOKE.
MISERY! AT THE AGE THAT MARIE CURIE FIRST WENT TO FRANCE TO STUDY, I'LL PROBABLY HAVE TEN CHILDREN...

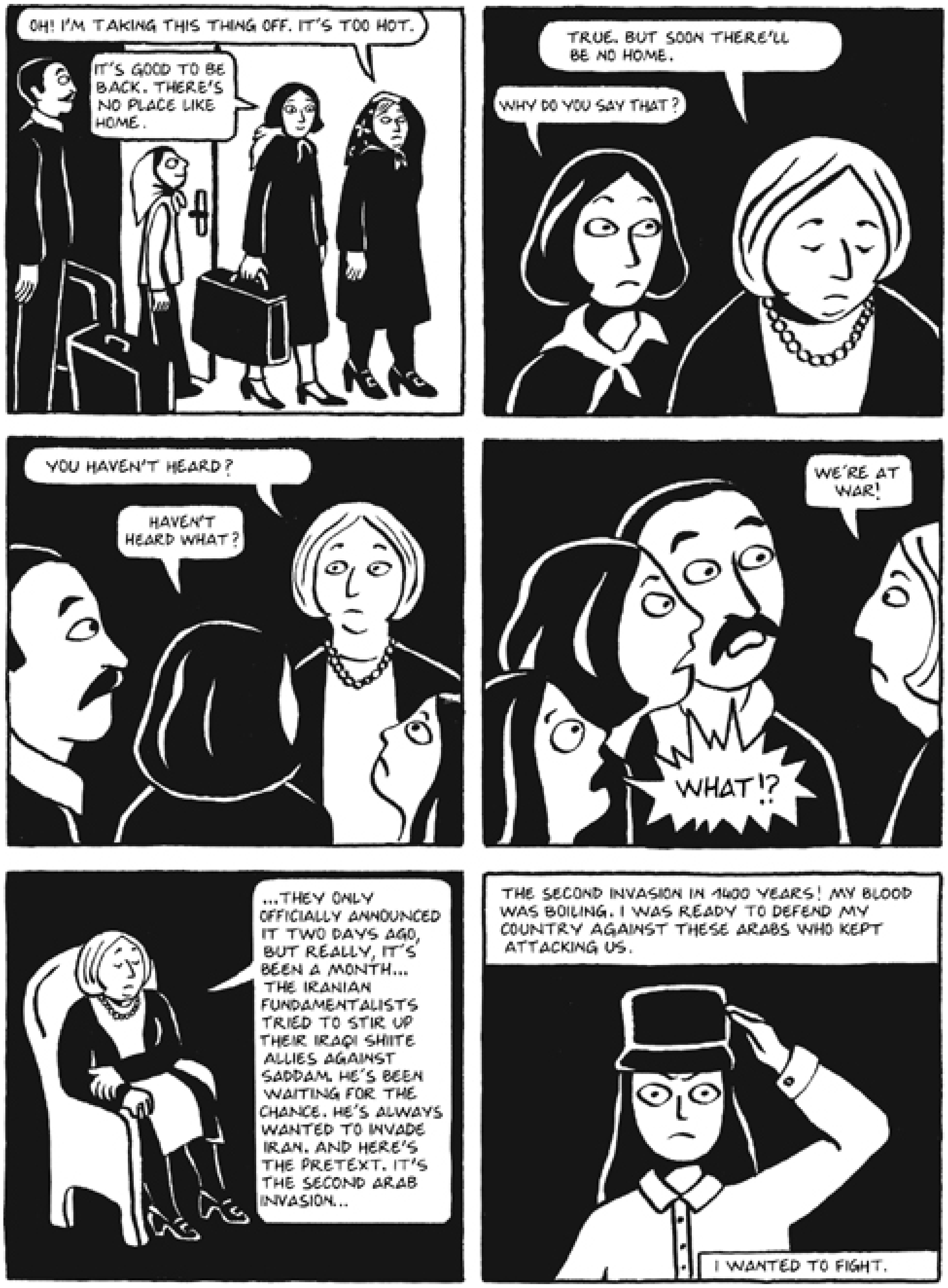

ONE NIGHT...
YOUR MOTHER'S CAR BROKE DOWN, WE HAVE TO PICK HER UP.
EBi!
MOM!
TWO GUYS...TWO BEARDED GUYS!... TWO FUNDAMENTALIST BASTARDS... THE BASTARDS...THE BASTARDS...THEY...
CALM DOWN DARLING, CALM DOWN, WHAT DID THEY DO?
MOM!
THEY INSULTED ME. THEY SAID THAT WOMEN LIKE ME SHOULD BE PUSHED UP AGAINST A WALL AND FUCKED. AND THEN THROWN IN THE GARBAGE.
...AND THAT IF I DIDN'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN, I SHOULD WEAR THE VEIL...
FORGET ABOUT THOSE MORONS!! LET'S GO HOME...
THAT INCIDENT MADE MY MOTHER SICK FOR SEVERAL DAYS.
ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU, MOM?
...
AND SO TO PROTECT WOMEN FROM ALL THE POTENTIAL RAPISTS, THEY DECREED THAT WEARING THE VEIL WAS OBLIGATORY.
WOMEN'S HAIR EMANATES RAYS THAT EXCITE MEN. THAT'S WHY WOMEN SHOULD COVER THEIR HAIR! IF IN FACT IT IS REALLY MORE CIVILIZED TO GO WITHOUT THE VEIL, THEN ANIMALS ARE MORE CIVILIZED THAN WE ARE.
INCREDIBLE! THEY THINK ALL MEN ARE PERVERTS!!
OF COURSE, BECAUSE THEY REALLY ARE PERVERTS!


IN NO TIME, THE WAY PEOPLE DRESSED BECAME AN IDEOLOGICAL SIGN. THERE WERE TWO KINDS OF WOMEN.
THE FUNDAMENTALIST WOMAN
THE MODERN WOMAN
YOU SHOWED YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME BY LETTING A FEW STRANDS OF HAIR SHOW.
THERE WERE ALSO TWO SORTS OF MEN.
THE FUNDAMENTALIST MAN
BEARD
SHIRT HANGING OUT
THE PROGRESSIVE MAN
SHAVED, WITH OR WITHOUT MUSTACHE
SHIRT TUCKED IN
ISLAM IS MORE OR LESS AGAINST SHAVING.
BUT LET'S BE FAIR. IF WOMEN FACED PRISON WHEN THEY REFUSED TO WEAR THE VEIL, IT WAS ALSO FORBIDDEN FOR MEN TO WEAR NECKTIES (THAT DREADED SYMBOL OF THE WEST). AND IF WOMEN'S HAIR GOT MEN EXCITED, THE SAME THING COULD BE SAID OF MEN'S BARE ARMS. AND SO, WEARING SHORT-SLEEVED SHIRTS WAS ALSO FORBIDDEN.
THERE WAS A KIND OF JUSTICE, AFTER ALL.
IT WASN'T ONLY THE GOVERNMENT THAT CHANGED. ORDINARY PEOPLE CHANGED TOO.
LOOK AT HER! LAST YEAR SHE WAS WEARING A MINISKIRT, SHOWING OFF HER BEEFY THIGHS TO THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD. AND NOW MADAME IS WEARING A CHADOR. IT SUITS HER BETTER, I GUESS.
AS FOR HER FUNDAMENTALIST HUSBAND WHO DRANK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR EVERY NIGHT, NOW HE USES MOUTHWASH EVERY TIME HE UTTERS THE WORD "ALCOHOL."
AND THEIR SON SAYS HE PRAYS EVERY DAY!
IF ANYONE EVER ASKS YOU WHAT YOU DO DURING THE DAY, SAY YOU PRAY, YOU UNDERSTAND??
OK...
AT FIRST, IT WAS A LITTLE HARD, BUT I LEARNED TO LIE QUICKLY.
I PRAY FIVE TIMES A DAY.
ME? TEN OR ELEVEN TIMES... SOMETIMES TWELVE.

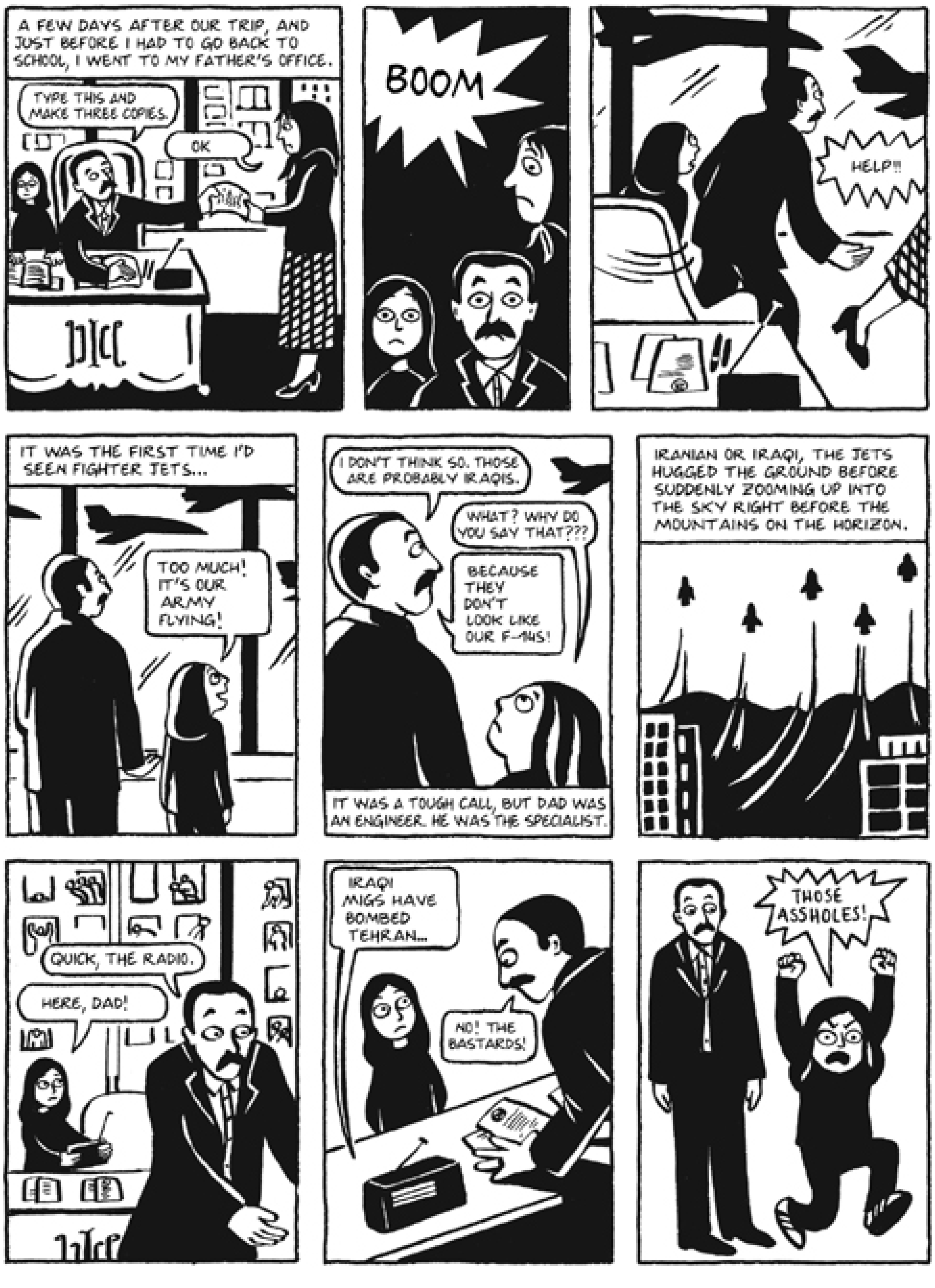

IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION WAS STILL IN THE AIR. THERE WERE SOME OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATIONS.
TOMORROW THERE'S GOING TO BE A MEETING AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISM.
I'M COMING TOO!
NO! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
SHE'S COMING TOO.
SHE SHOULD START LEARNING TO DEFEND HER RIGHTS AS A WOMAN RIGHT NOW!
SINCE THE 1979 REVOLUTION, I'D GROWN OLDER (WELL, A YEAR OLDER) AND MOM HAD CHANGED.
SO I WENT WITH THEM. I PASSED OUT FLYERS...
GUNS MAY SHOOT AND KNIVES MAY CARVE, BUT WE WON'T WEAR YOUR SILLY SCARVES!
...WHEN SUDDENLY THINGS GOT NASTY.
THE SCARF OR A BEATING!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I SAW VIOLENCE WITH MY OWN EYES.
DAD!
THAT WAS OUR LAST DEMONSTRATION.
EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF!

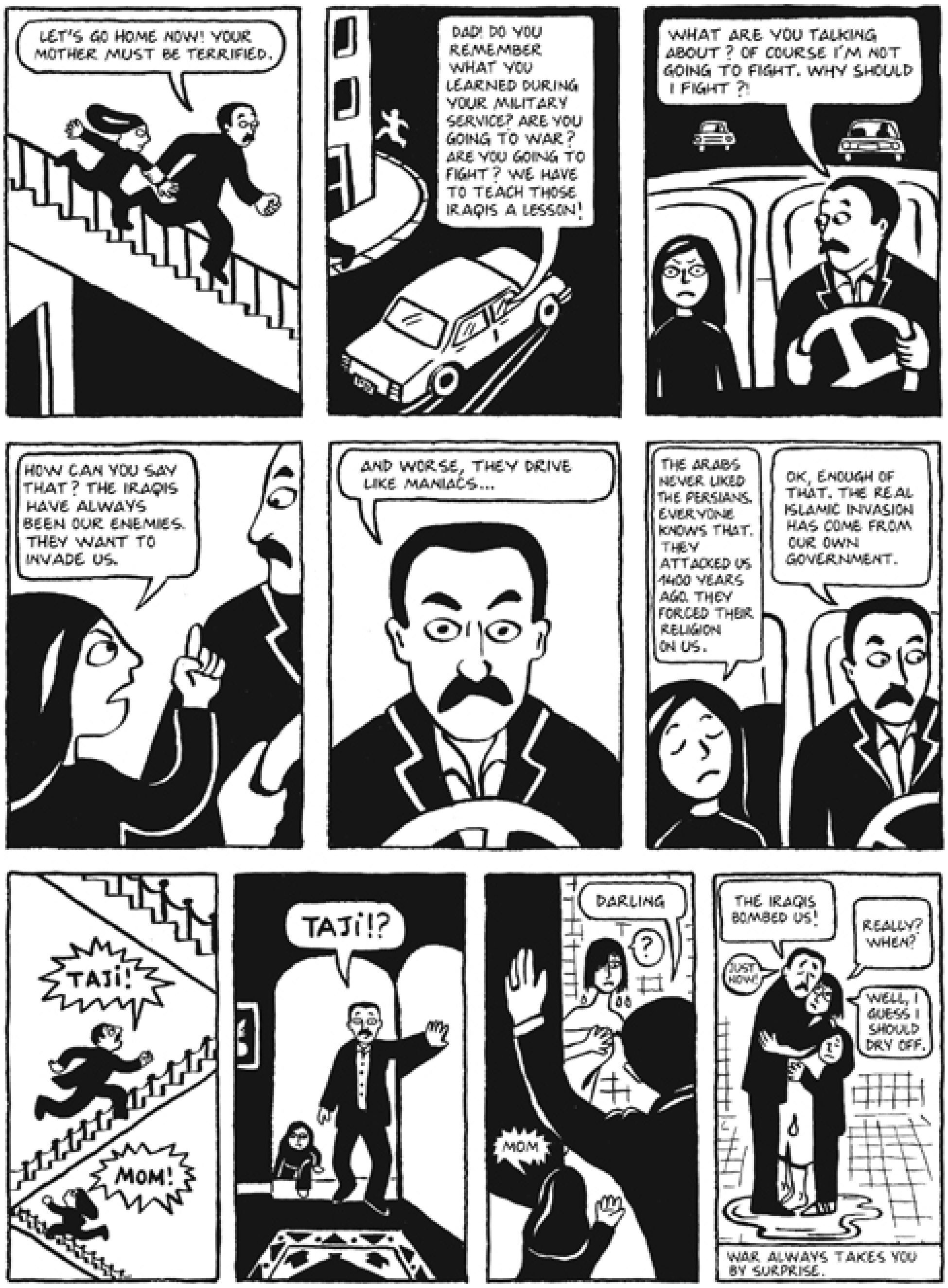

THINGS GOT WORSE FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT. IN SEPTEMBER 1980, MY PARENTS ABRUPTLY PLANNED A VACATION. I THINK THEY REALIZED THAT SOON SUCH THINGS WOULD NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE. AS IT HAPPENED, THEY WERE RIGHT. AND SO WE WENT TO ITALY AND SPAIN FOR THREE WEEKS...
...IT WAS WONDERFUL.

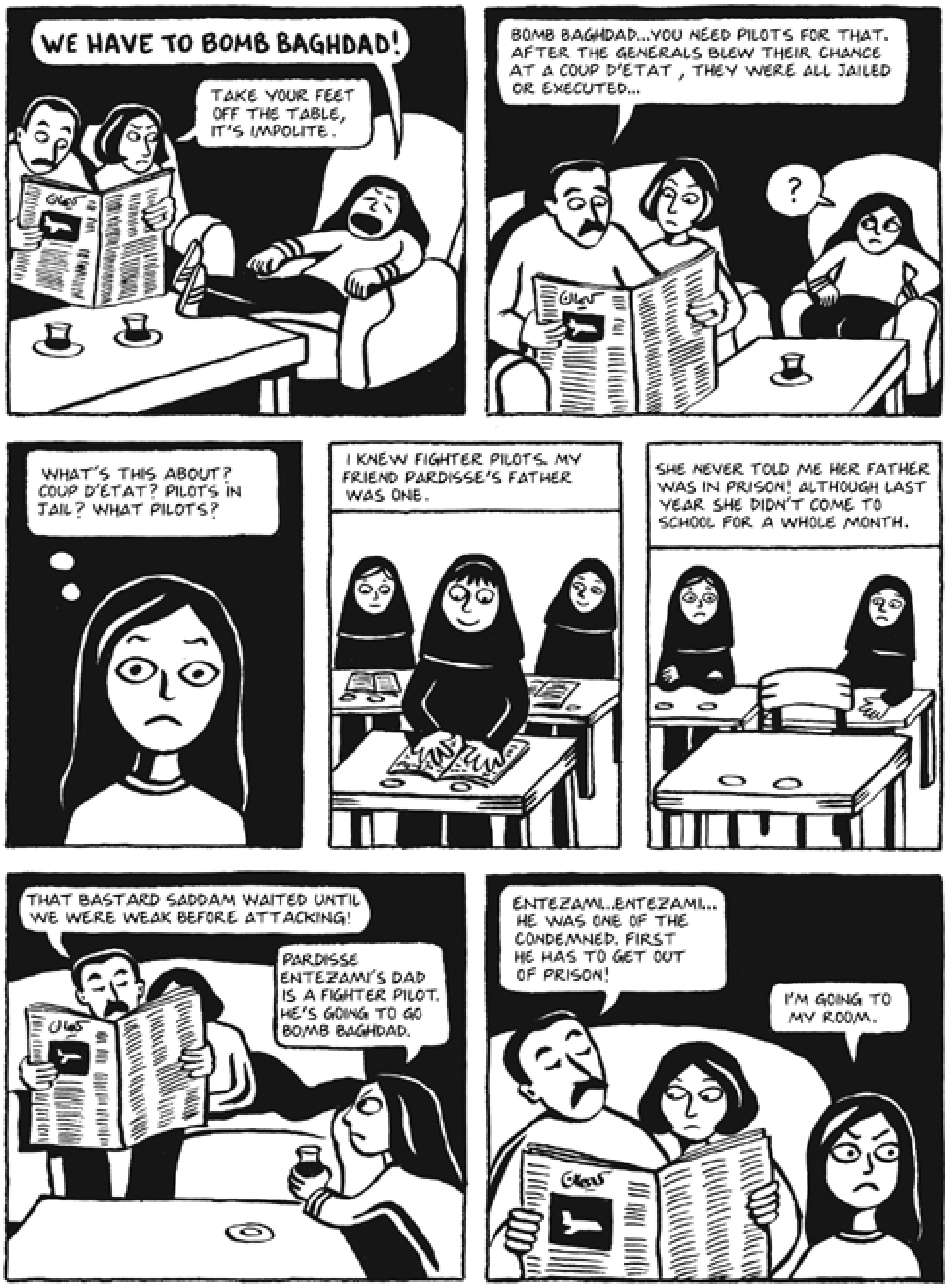

RIGHT BEFORE GOING BACK, IN THE HOTEL ROOM IN MADRID.
LOOK AT THIS.
IRAN
THE TV SHOWED A MAP OF IRAN AND A BLACK CLOUD COVERING THE COUNTRY LITTLE BY LITTLE.
IRAK
IRAN
AFGHANISTAN
KOWEIT
GOLFO PERSICO
PAKISTAN
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THIS?
TOO BAD WE DON'T KNOW SPANISH.
MAYBE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT POLLUTION. YOU KNOW, TEHRAN IS THE FOURTH MOST POLLUTED CITY IN THE WORLD.
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THE WHOLE COUNTRY, NOT JUST THE CAPITAL.
THE NEXT DAY MY GRANDMOTHER CAME TO PICK US UP AT THE AIRPORT.
GRANDMA! I GOT YOU A BLACK DRESS!
SHE LOOKED WORRIED.
EVERYTHING OK, MOM?
YES...

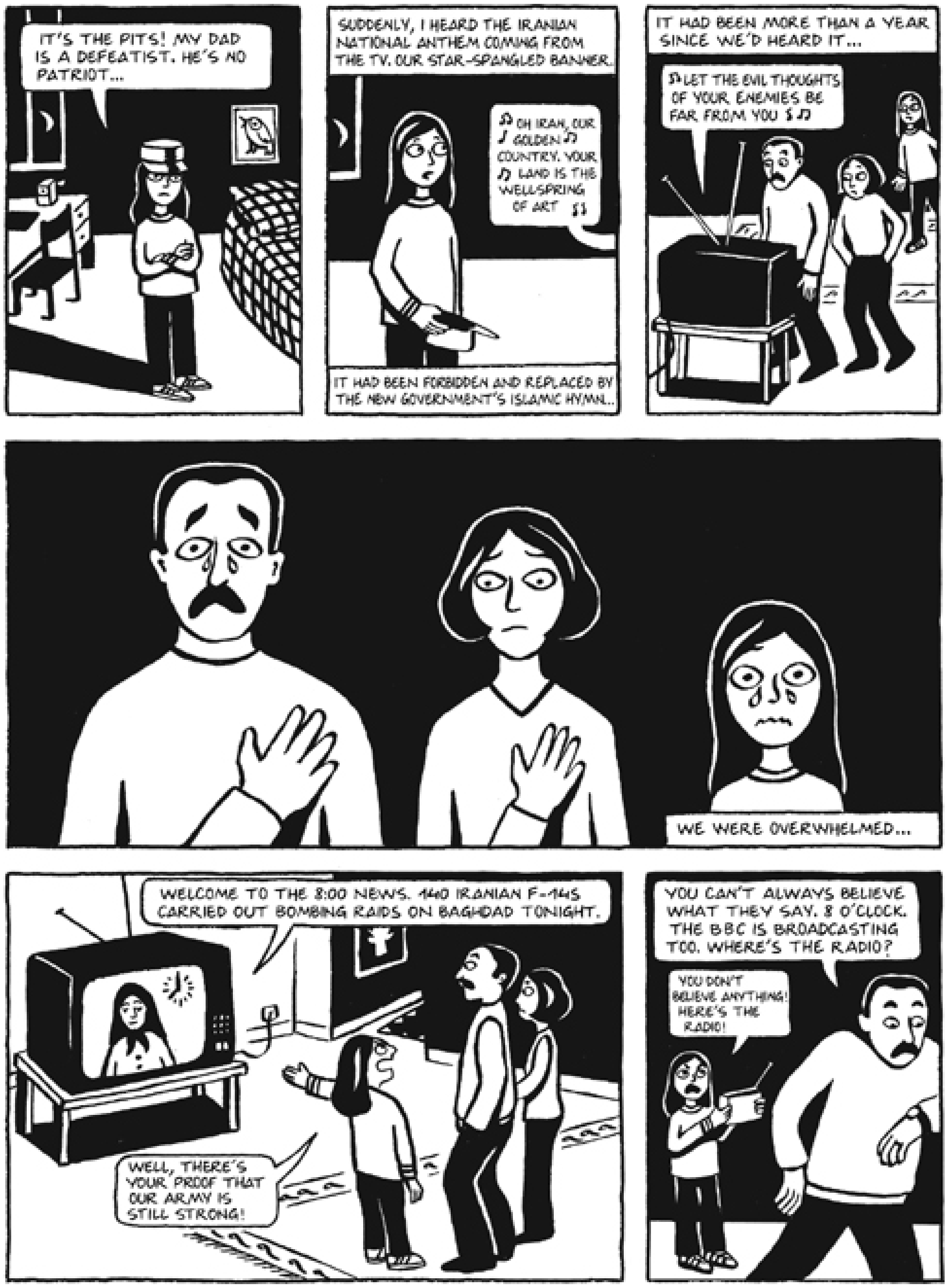

OH! I'M TAKING THIS THING OFF. IT'S TOO HOT.
IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK. THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.
TRUE. BUT SOON THERE'LL BE NO HOME.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD?
HAVEN'T HEARD WHAT?
WE'RE AT WAR!
WHAT!?
...THEY ONLY OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED IT TWO DAYS AGO, BUT REALLY, IT'S BEEN A MONTH... THE IRANIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS TRIED TO STIR UP THEIR IRAQI SHIITE ALLIES AGAINST SADDAM. HE'S BEEN WAITING FOR THE CHANCE. HE'S ALWAYS WANTED TO INVADE IRAN. AND HERE'S THE PRETEXT. IT'S THE SECOND ARAB INVASION...
THE SECOND INVASION IN 1400 YEARS! MY BLOOD WAS BOILING. I WAS READY TO DEFEND MY COUNTRY AGAINST THESE ARABS WHO KEPT ATTACKING US.
I WANTED TO FIGHT.

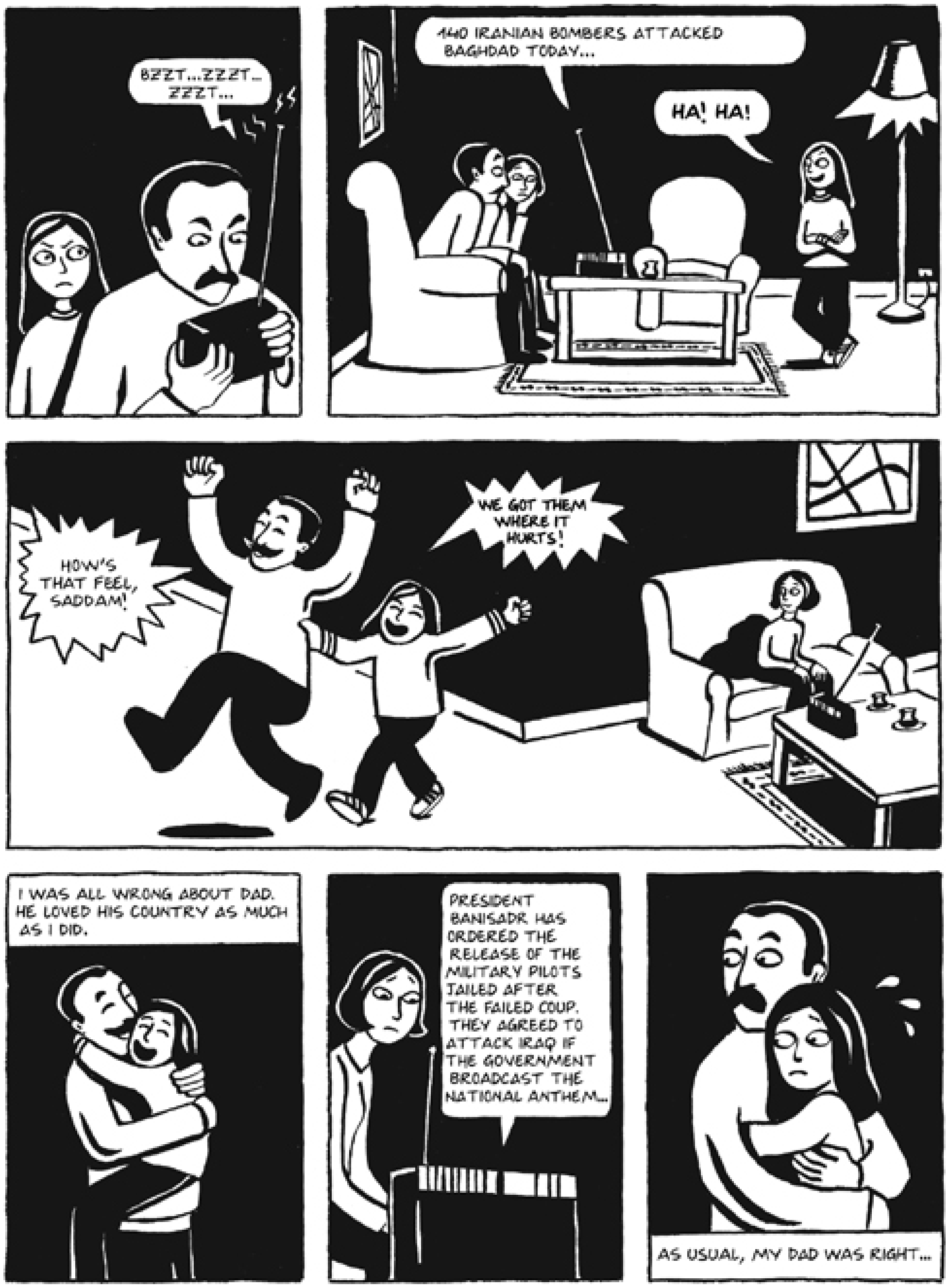
# THE F-14s

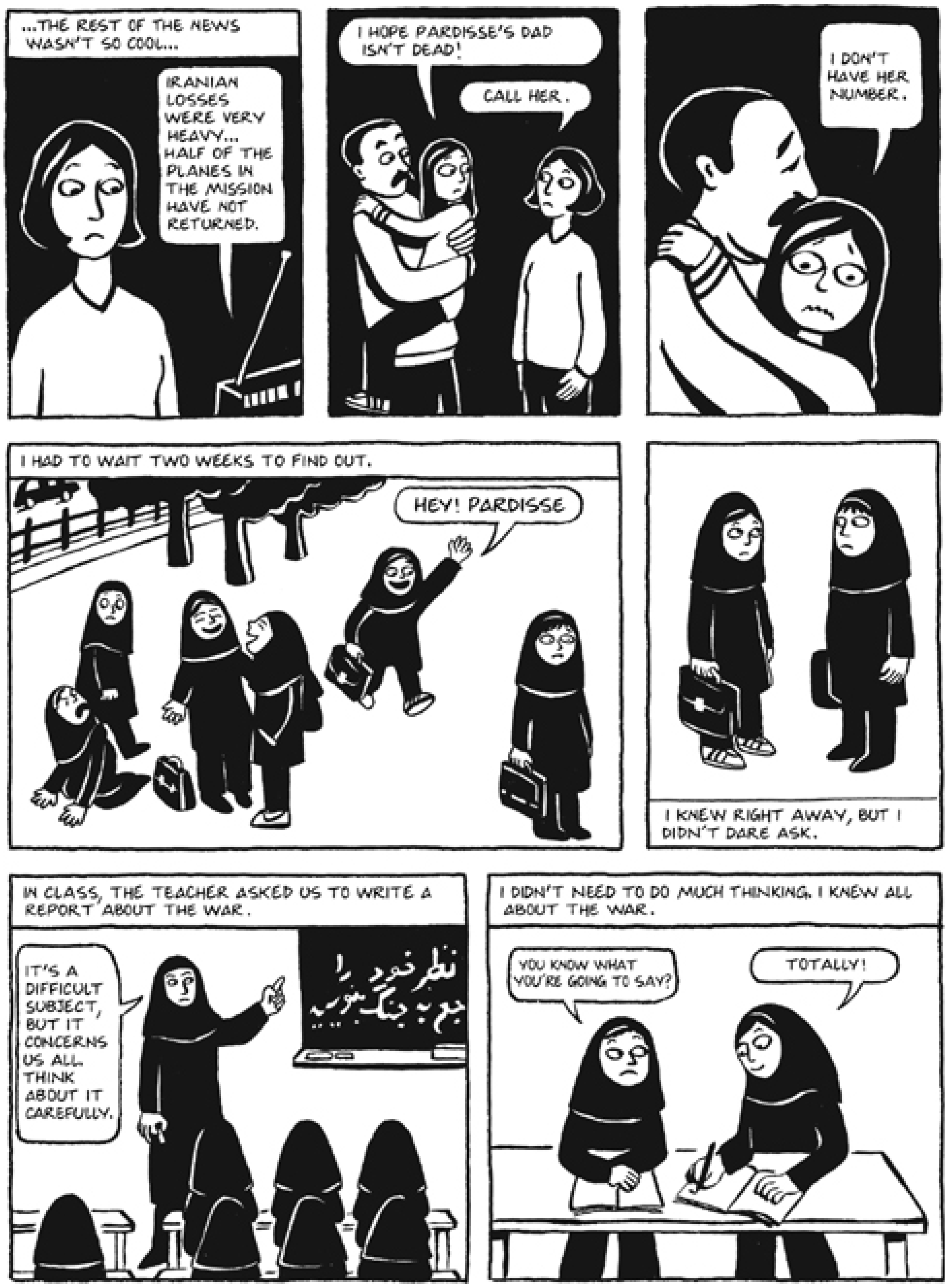

A FEW DAYS AFTER OUR TRIP, AND JUST BEFORE I HAD TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL, I WENT TO MY FATHER'S OFFICE.
TYPE THIS AND MAKE THREE COPIES.
OK
BOOM
HELP!!
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN FIGHTER JETS...
TOO MUCH! IT'S OUR ARMY FLYING!
I DON'T THINK SO. THOSE ARE PROBABLY IRAQIS.
WHAT? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT???
BECAUSE THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE OUR F-14S!
IT WAS A TOUGH CALL, BUT DAD WAS AN ENGINEER. HE WAS THE SPECIALIST.
IRANIAN OR IRAQI, THE JETS HUGGED THE GROUND BEFORE SUDDENLY ZOOMING UP INTO THE SKY RIGHT BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS ON THE HORIZON.
QUICK, THE RADIO.
HERE, DAD!
IRAQI MIGS HAVE BOMBED TEHRAN...
NO! THE BASTARDS!
THOSE ASSHOLES!

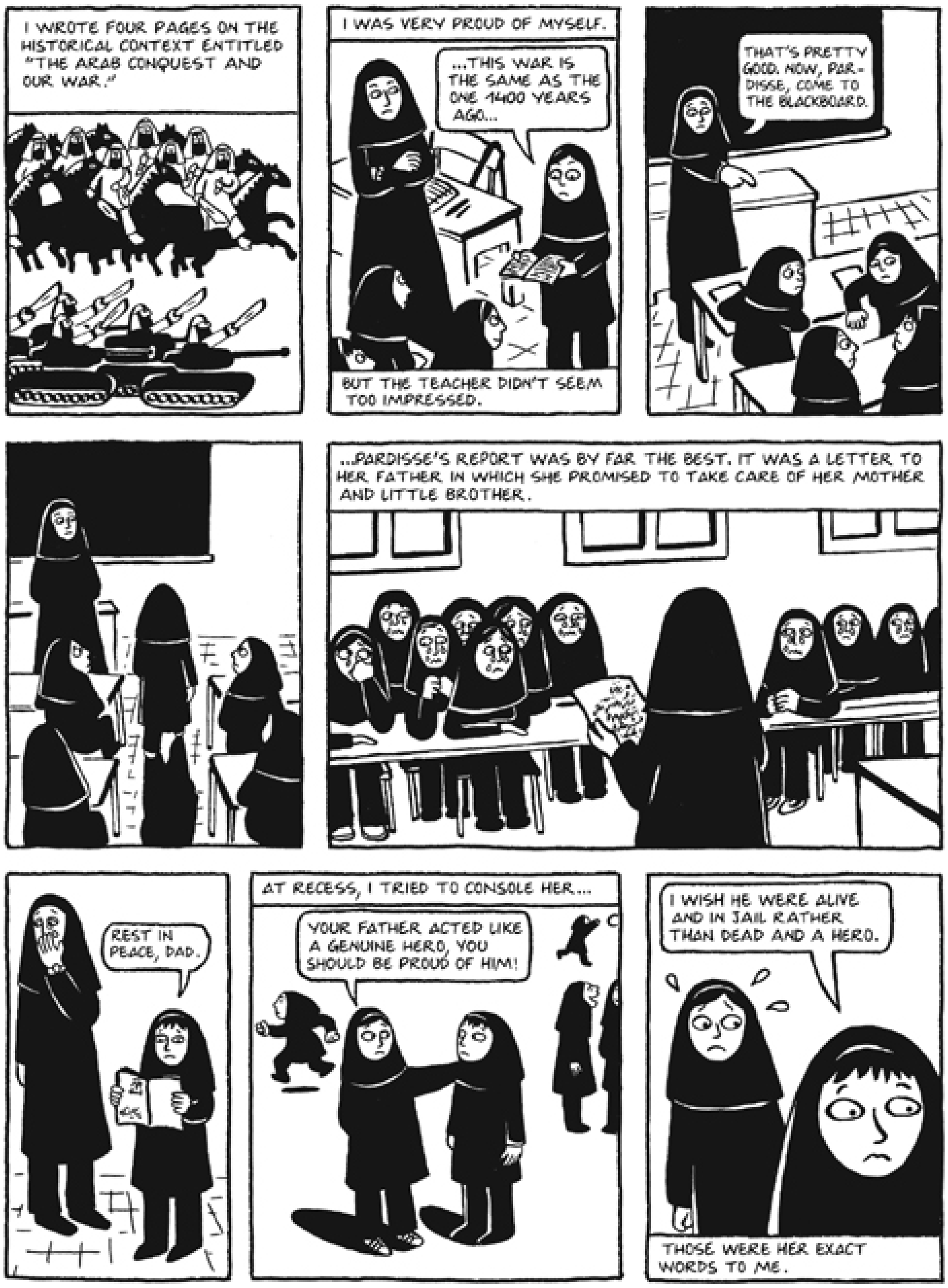

LET'S GO HOME NOW! YOUR MOTHER MUST BE TERRIFIED.
DAD! DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR MILITARY SERVICE? ARE YOU GOING TO WAR? ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT? WE HAVE TO TEACH THOSE IRAQIS A LESSON!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? OF COURSE I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT. WHY SHOULD I FIGHT?!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? THE IRAQIS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN OUR ENEMIES. THEY WANT TO INVADE US.
AND WORSE, THEY DRIVE LIKE MANIACS...
THE ARABS NEVER LIKED THE PERSIANS. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT. THEY ATTACKED US 1400 YEARS AGO. THEY FORCED THEIR RELIGION ON US.
OK, ENOUGH OF THAT. THE REAL ISLAMIC INVASION HAS COME FROM OUR OWN GOVERNMENT.
TAJI!
MOM!
TAJI!?
DARLING
?
MOM
THE IRAQIS BOMBED US!
REALLY? WHEN?
JUST NOW!
WELL, I GUESS I SHOULD DRY OFF.
WAR ALWAYS TAKES YOU BY SURPRISE.


WE HAVE TO BOMB BAGHDAD!
TAKE YOUR FEET OFF THE TABLE, IT'S IMPOLITE.
BOMB BAGHDAD...YOU NEED PILOTS FOR THAT. AFTER THE GENERALS BLEW THEIR CHANCE AT A COUP D'ETAT, THEY WERE ALL JAILED OR EXECUTED...
?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT? COUP D'ETAT? PILOTS IN JAIL? WHAT PILOTS?
I KNEW FIGHTER PILOTS. MY FRIEND PARDISSE'S FATHER WAS ONE.
SHE NEVER TOLD ME HER FATHER WAS IN PRISON! ALTHOUGH LAST YEAR SHE DIDN'T COME TO SCHOOL FOR A WHOLE MONTH.
THAT BASTARD SADDAM WAITED UNTIL WE WERE WEAK BEFORE ATTACKING!
PARDISSE ENTEZAMI'S DAD IS A FIGHTER PILOT. HE'S GOING TO GO BOMB BAGHDAD.
ENTEZAMI..ENTEZAMI... HE WAS ONE OF THE CONDEMNED. FIRST HE HAS TO GET OUT OF PRISON!
I'M GOING TO MY ROOM.

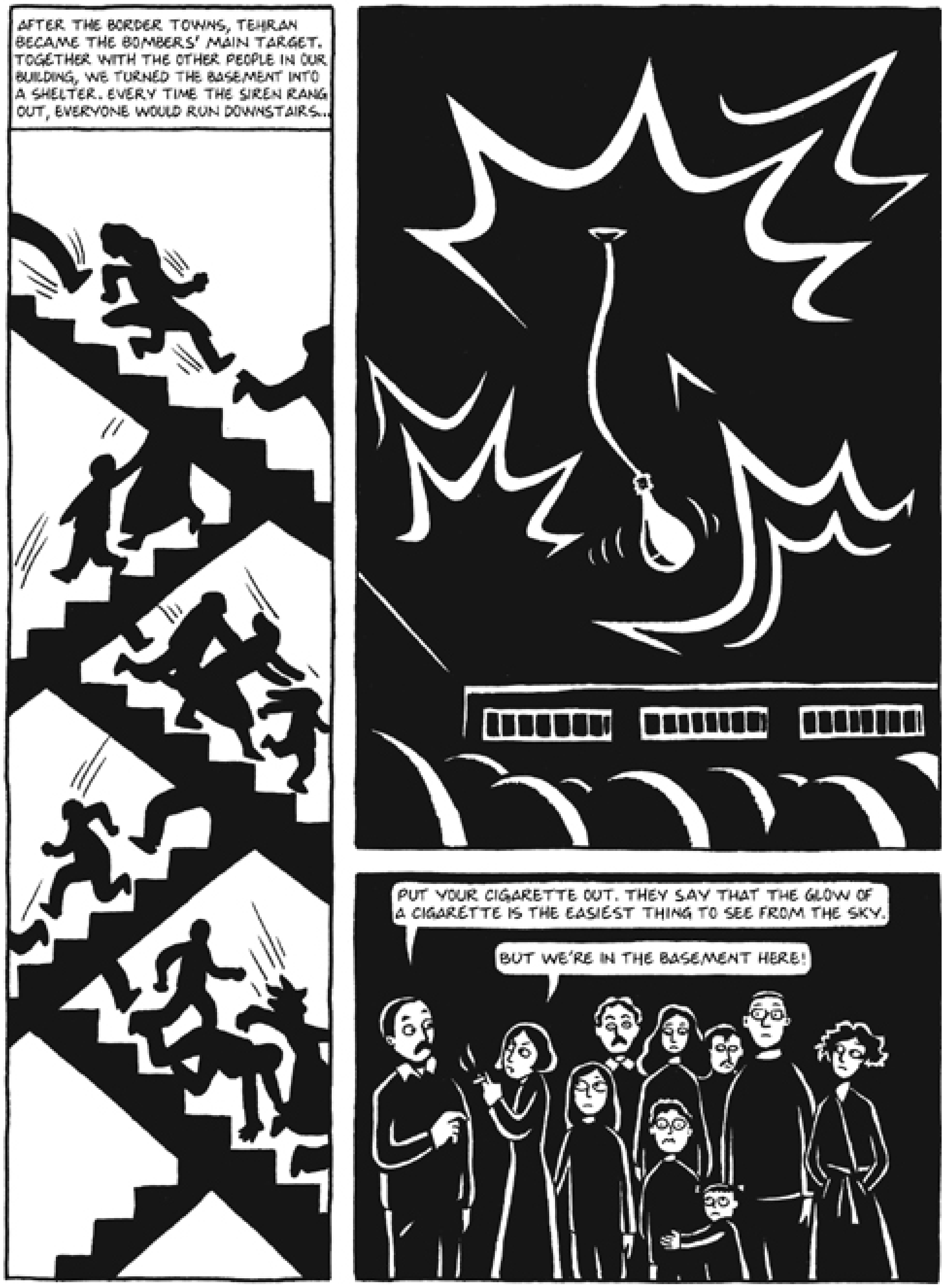

IT'S THE PITS! MY DAD IS A DEFEATIST. HE'S NO PATRIOT...
SUDDENLY, I HEARD THE IRANIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM COMING FROM THE TV. OUR STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.
♫ OH IRAN, OUR ♩ GOLDEN ♫ COUNTRY. YOUR ♫ LAND IS THE WELLSPRING OF ART ♫
IT HAD BEEN FORBIDDEN AND REPLACED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S ISLAMIC HYMN..
IT HAD BEEN MORE THAN A YEAR SINCE WE'D HEARD IT...
♫ LET THE EVIL THOUGHTS OF YOUR ENEMIES BE FAR FROM YOU ♫
WE WERE OVERWHELMED...
WELCOME TO THE 8:00 NEWS. 140 IRANIAN F-14S CARRIED OUT BOMBING RAIDS ON BAGHDAD TONIGHT.
WELL, THERE'S YOUR PROOF THAT OUR ARMY IS STILL STRONG!
YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY. 8 O'CLOCK. THE BBC IS BROADCASTING TOO. WHERE'S THE RADIO?
YOU DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING! HERE'S THE RADIO!


BZZT...ZZZT...
ZZZT...
140 IRANIAN BOMBERS ATTACKED BAGHDAD TODAY...
HA! HA!
HOW'S THAT FEEL, SADDAM!
WE GOT THEM WHERE IT HURTS!
I WAS ALL WRONG ABOUT DAD. HE LOVED HIS COUNTRY AS MUCH AS I DID.
PRESIDENT BANISADR HAS ORDERED THE RELEASE OF THE MILITARY PILOTS JAILED AFTER THE FAILED COUP. THEY AGREED TO ATTACK IRAQ IF THE GOVERNMENT BROADCAST THE NATIONAL ANTHEM...
AS USUAL, MY DAD WAS RIGHT...

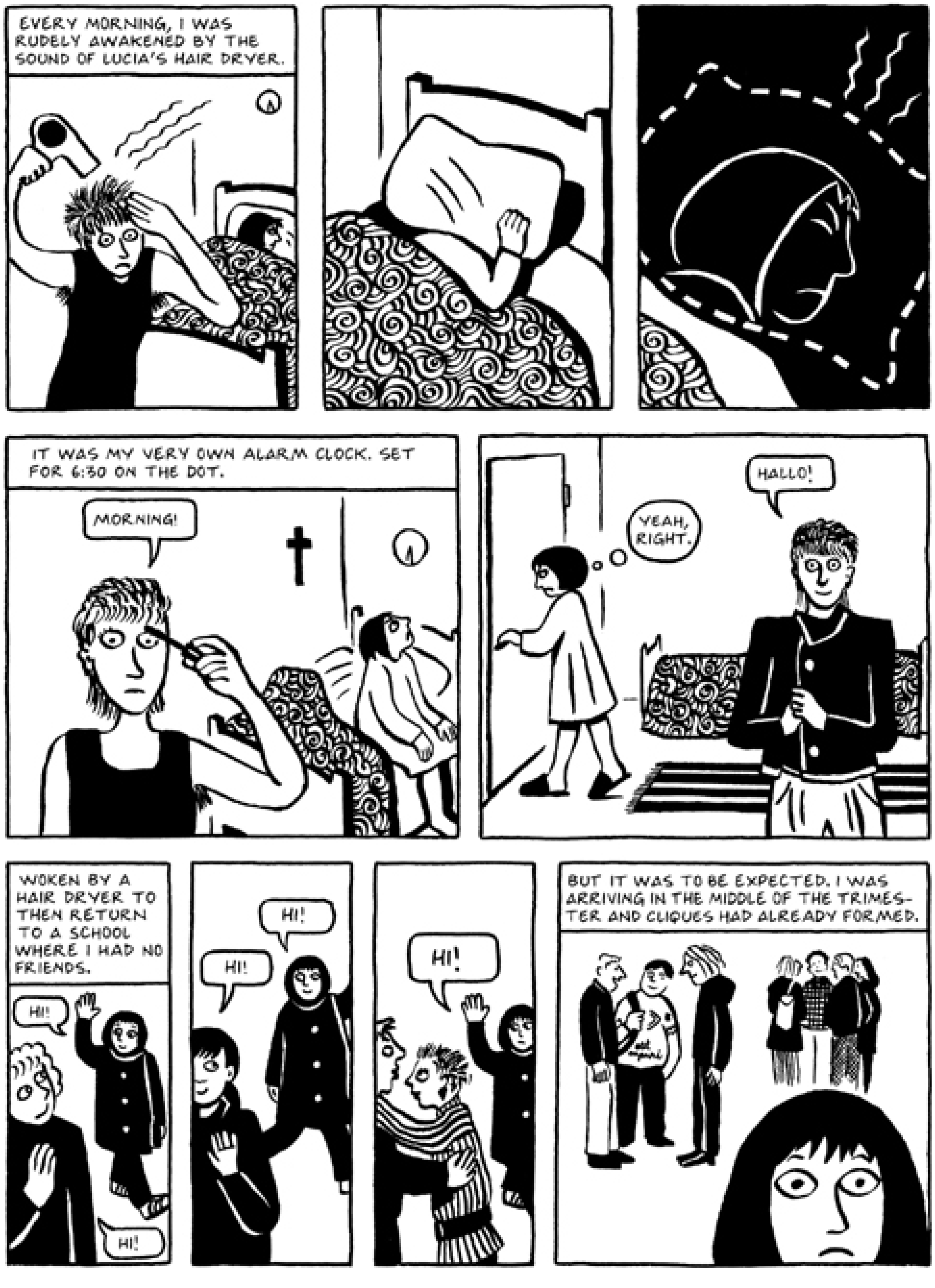

...THE REST OF THE NEWS WASN'T SO COOL...
IRANIAN LOSSES WERE VERY HEAVY... HALF OF THE PLANES IN THE MISSION HAVE NOT RETURNED.
I HOPE PARDISSE'S DAD ISN'T DEAD!
CALL HER.
I DON'T HAVE HER NUMBER.
I HAD TO WAIT TWO WEEKS TO FIND OUT.
HEY! PARDISSE
I KNEW RIGHT AWAY, BUT I DIDN'T DARE ASK.
IN CLASS, THE TEACHER ASKED US TO WRITE A REPORT ABOUT THE WAR.
IT'S A DIFFICULT SUBJECT, BUT IT CONCERNS US ALL. THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY.
نظر خود را
راجع به جنگ بنویسید
I DIDN'T NEED TO DO MUCH THINKING. I KNEW ALL ABOUT THE WAR.
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY?
TOTALLY!


I WROTE FOUR PAGES ON THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT ENTITLED "THE ARAB CONQUEST AND OUR WAR."
I WAS VERY PROUD OF MYSELF.
...THIS WAR IS THE SAME AS THE ONE 1400 YEARS AGO...
BUT THE TEACHER DIDN'T SEEM TOO IMPRESSED.
THAT'S PRETTY GOOD. NOW, PARDISSE, COME TO THE BLACKBOARD.
...PARDISSE'S REPORT WAS BY FAR THE BEST. IT WAS A LETTER TO HER FATHER IN WHICH SHE PROMISED TO TAKE CARE OF HER MOTHER AND LITTLE BROTHER.
REST IN PEACE, DAD.
AT RECESS, I TRIED TO CONSOLE HER...
YOUR FATHER ACTED LIKE A GENUINE HERO, YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF HIM!
I WISH HE WERE ALIVE AND IN JAIL RATHER THAN DEAD AND A HERO.
THOSE WERE HER EXACT WORDS TO ME.

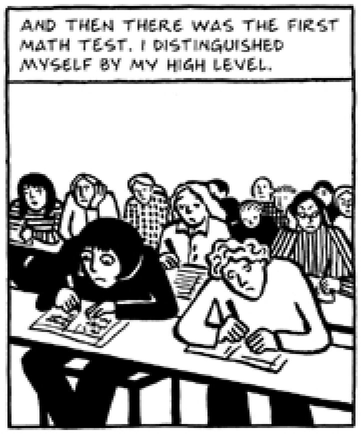
# THE WINE

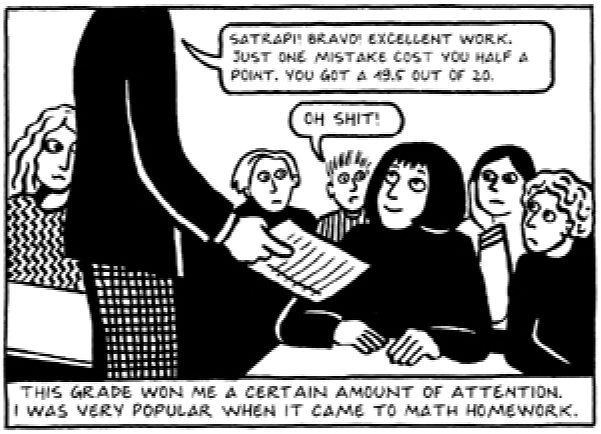

AFTER THE BORDER TOWNS, TEHRAN BECAME THE BOMBERS' MAIN TARGET. TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE IN OUR BUILDING, WE TURNED THE BASEMENT INTO A SHELTER. EVERY TIME THE SIREN RANG OUT, EVERYONE WOULD RUN DOWNSTAIRS...
PUT YOUR CIGARETTE OUT. THEY SAY THAT THE GLOW OF A CIGARETTE IS THE EASIEST THING TO SEE FROM THE SKY.
BUT WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT HERE!

# TYROL


EVERY MORNING, I WAS RUDELY AWAKENED BY THE SOUND OF LUCIA'S HAIR DRYER.
IT WAS MY VERY OWN ALARM CLOCK. SET FOR 6:30 ON THE DOT.
MORNING!
YEAH, RIGHT.
HALLO!
WOKEN BY A HAIR DRYER TO THEN RETURN TO A SCHOOL WHERE I HAD NO FRIENDS.
HI!
HI!
HI!
HI!
HI!
BUT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED. I WAS ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIMESTER AND CLIQUES HAD ALREADY FORMED.

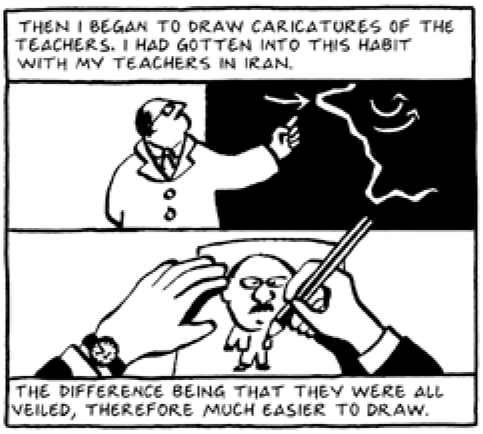
AND THEN THERE WAS THE FIRST MATH TEST. I DISTINGUISHED MYSELF BY MY HIGH LEVEL.




SATRAPI! BRAVO! EXCELLENT WORK. JUST ONE MISTAKE COST YOU HALF A POINT. YOU GOT A 19.5 OUT OF 20.
OH SHIT!

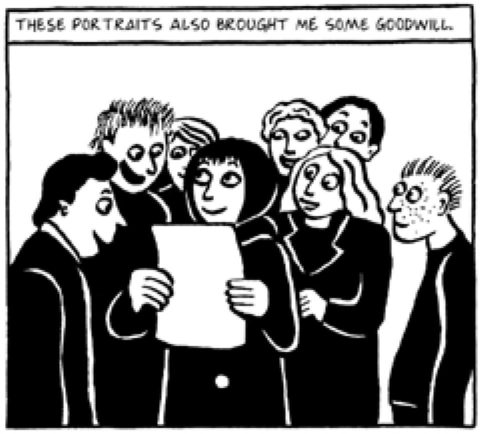
THIS GRADE WON ME A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ATTENTION. I WAS VERY POPULAR WHEN IT CAME TO MATH HOMEWORK.

THEN I BEGAN TO DRAW CARICATURES OF THE TEACHERS. I HAD GOTTEN INTO THIS HABIT WITH MY TEACHERS IN IRAN.

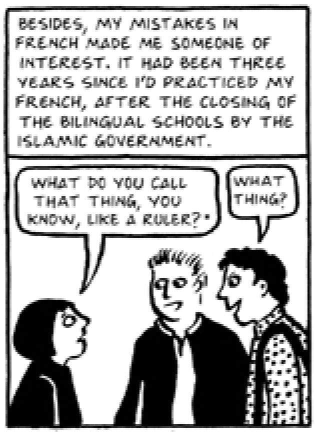


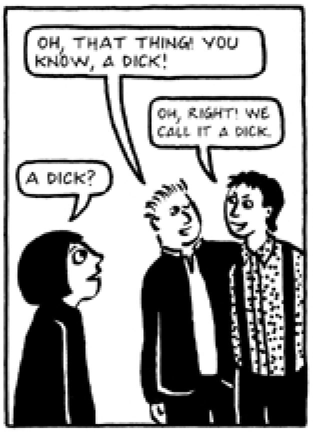
THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THEY WERE ALL VEILED, THEREFORE MUCH EASIER TO DRAW.

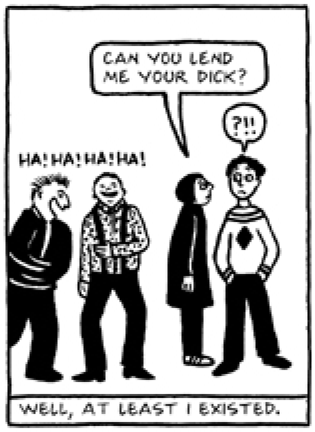
THESE PORTRAITS ALSO BROUGHT ME SOME GOODWILL.



BESIDES, MY MISTAKES IN FRENCH MADE ME SOMEONE OF INTEREST. IT HAD BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE I'D PRACTICED MY FRENCH, AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS BY THE ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT.


WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT THING, YOU KNOW, LIKE A RULER?*
WHAT THING?

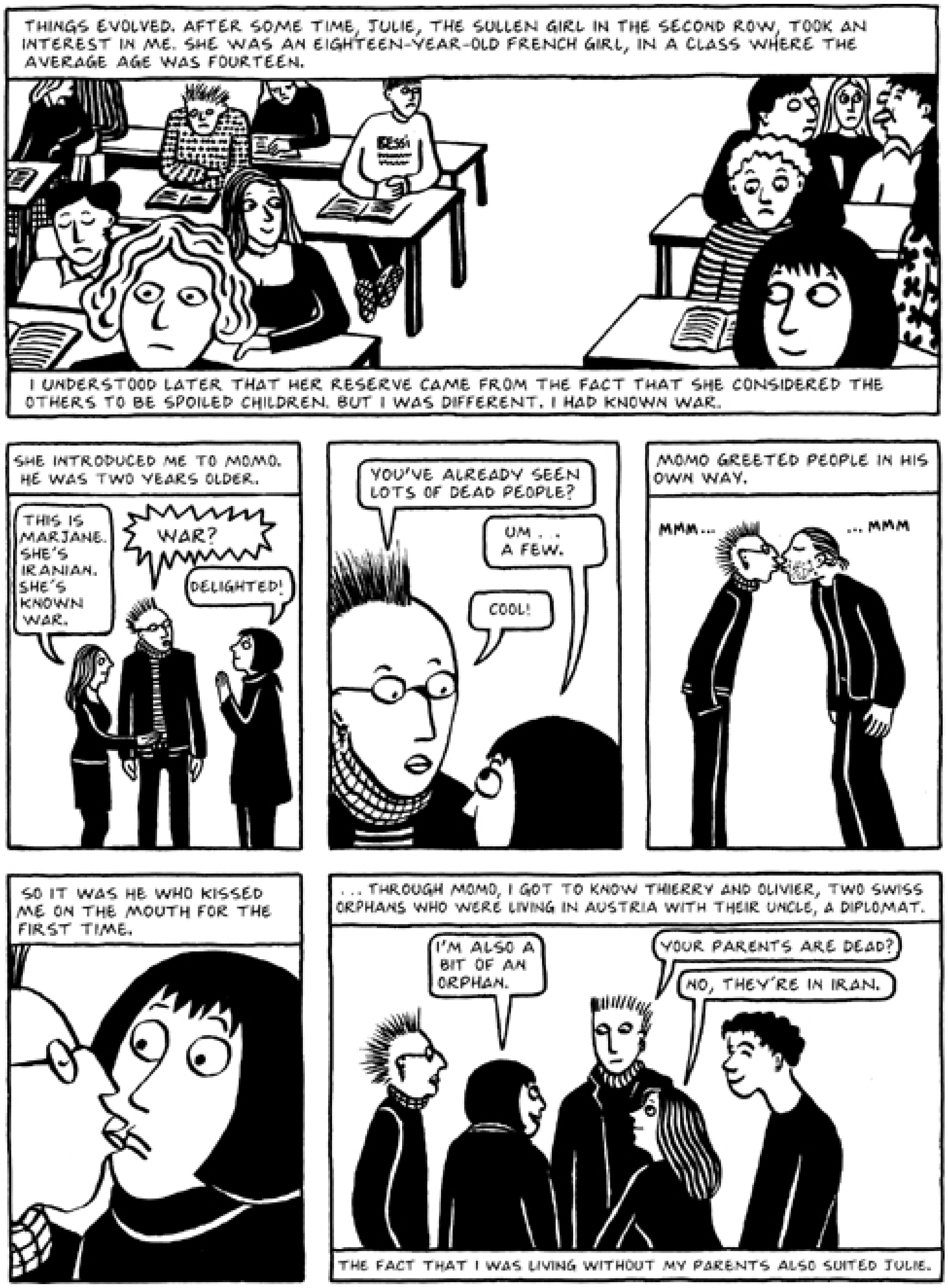

OH, THAT THING! YOU KNOW, A DICK!
OH, RIGHT! WE CALL IT A DICK.
A DICK?

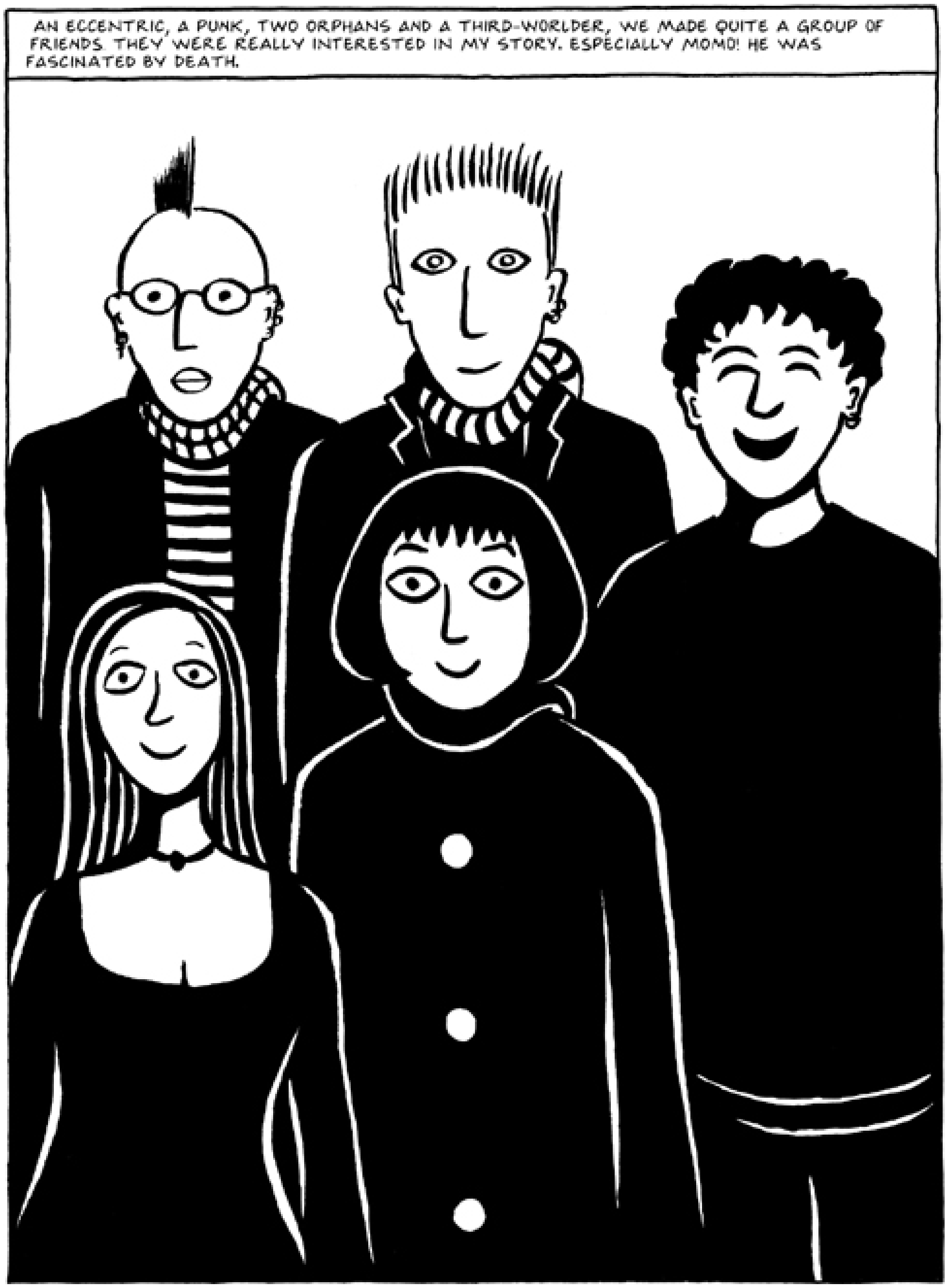

CAN YOU LEND ME YOUR DICK?
?!!
HA!HA!HA!HA!

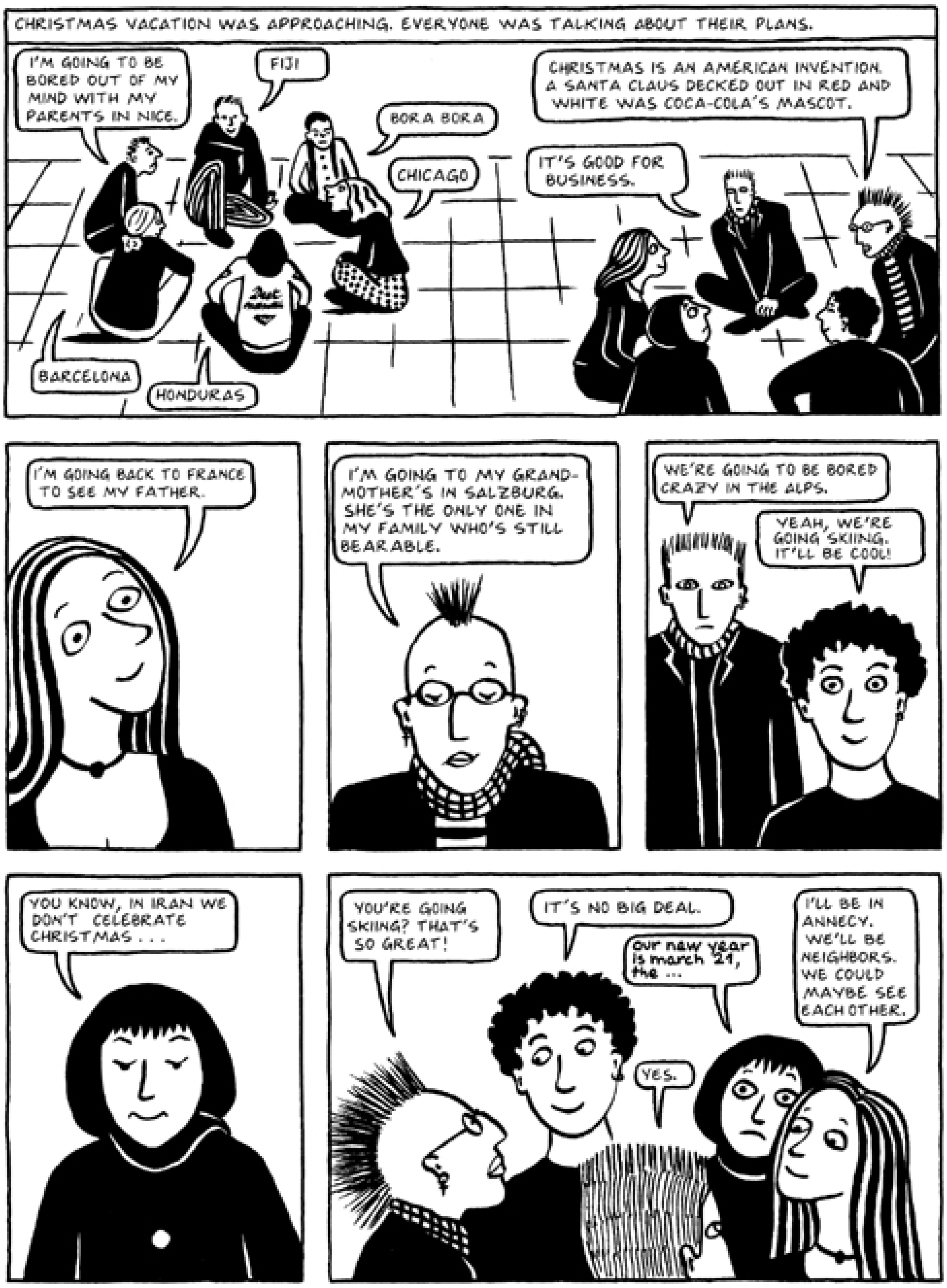
WELL, AT LEAST I EXISTED.

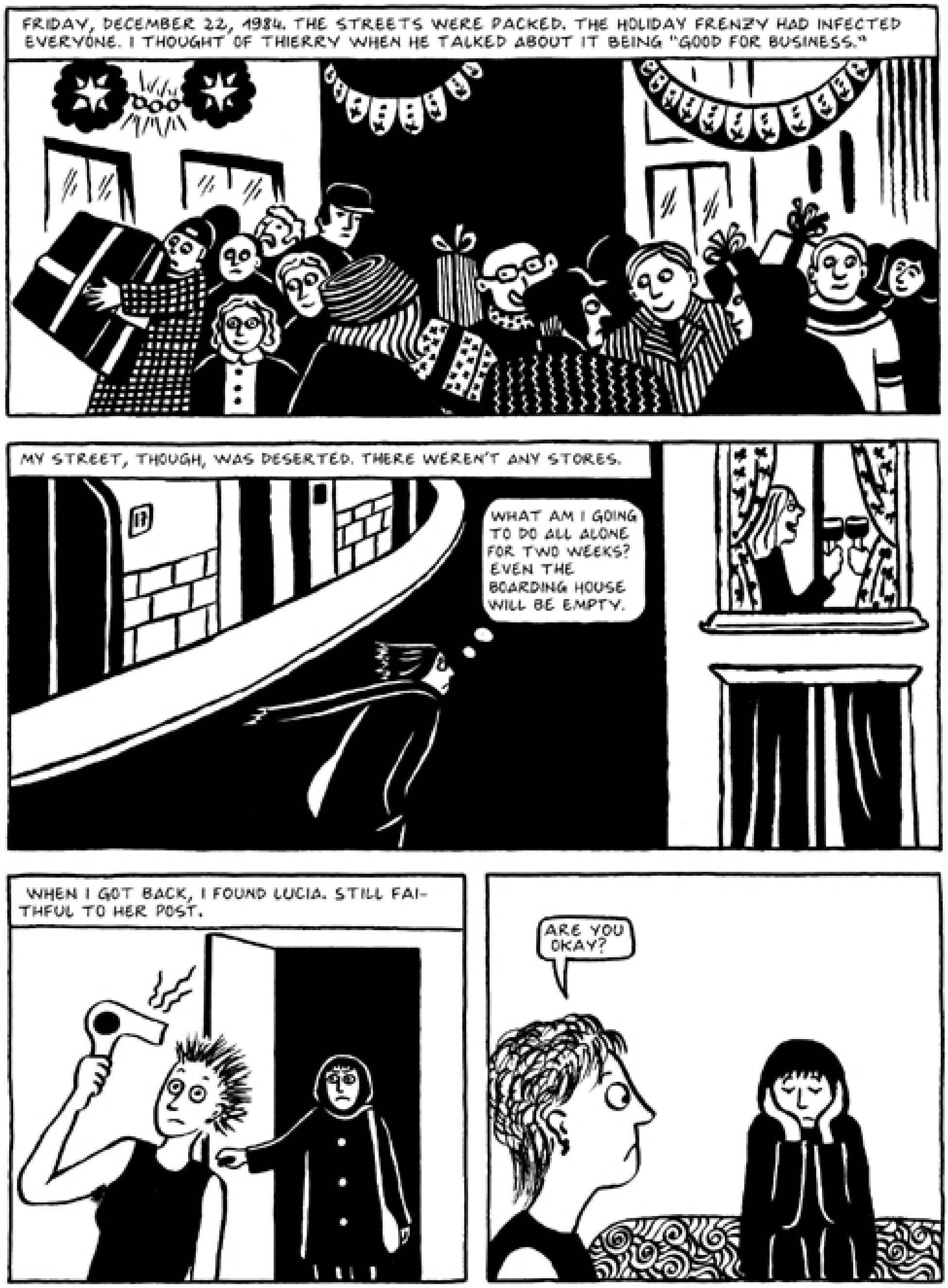
---

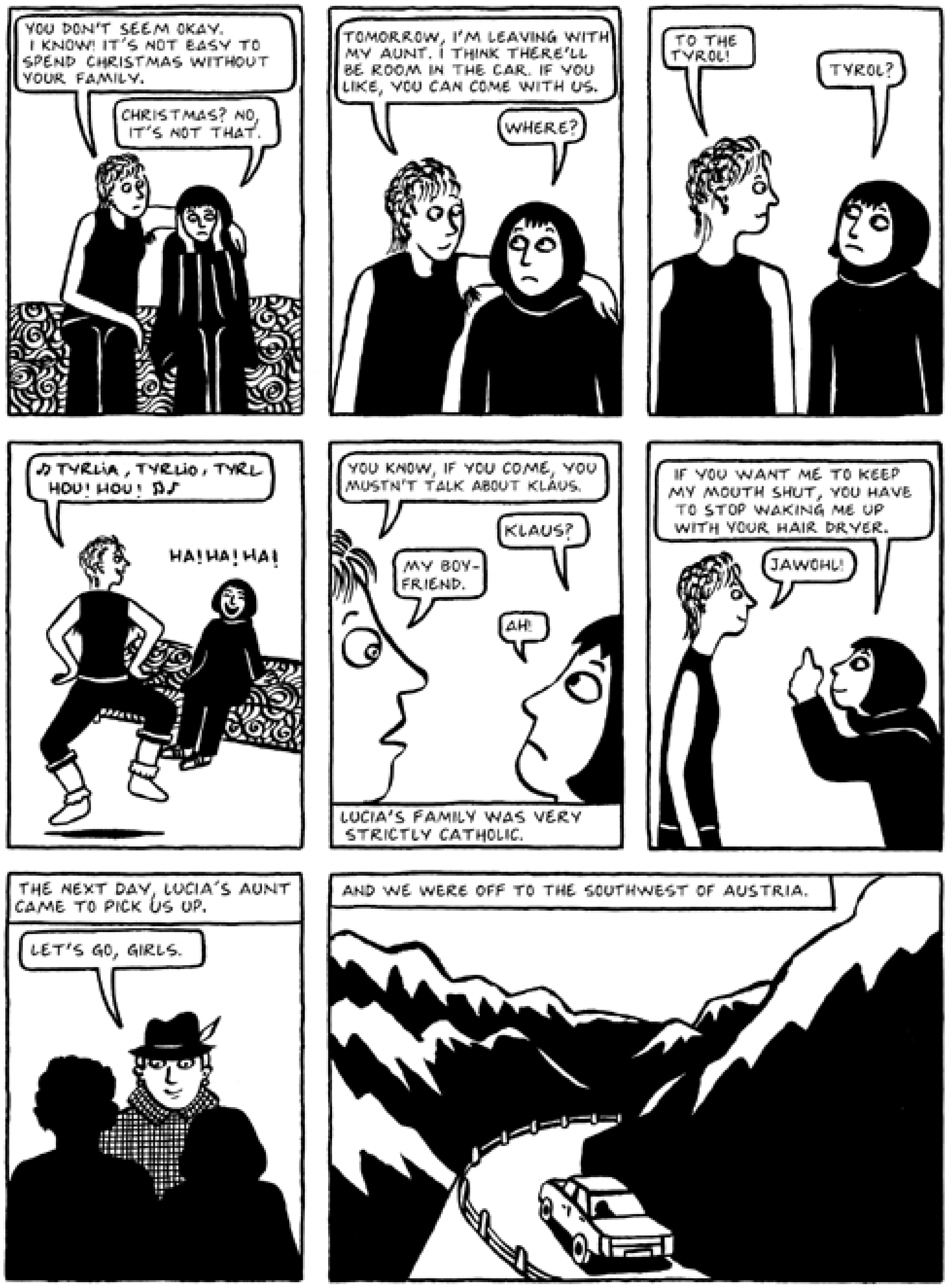
* I MEANT A TRIANGLE.

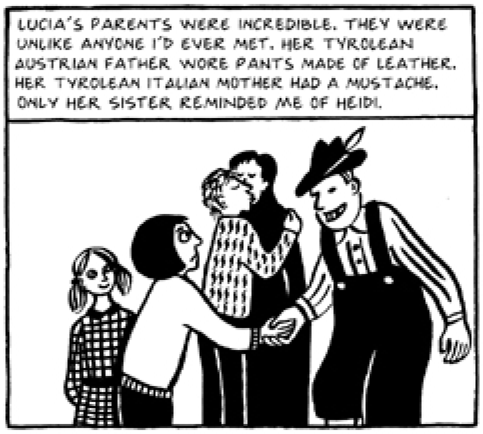

THINGS EVOLVED. AFTER SOME TIME, JULIE, THE SULLEN GIRL IN THE SECOND ROW, TOOK AN INTEREST IN ME. SHE WAS AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD FRENCH GIRL, IN A CLASS WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE WAS FOURTEEN.
I UNDERSTOOD LATER THAT HER RESERVE CAME FROM THE FACT THAT SHE CONSIDERED THE OTHERS TO BE SPOILED CHILDREN. BUT I WAS DIFFERENT. I HAD KNOWN WAR.
SHE INTRODUCED ME TO MOMO. HE WAS TWO YEARS OLDER.
THIS IS MARJANE. SHE'S IRANIAN. SHE'S KNOWN WAR.
WAR?
DELIGHTED!
YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN LOTS OF DEAD PEOPLE?
UM . . A FEW.
COOL!
MOMO GREETED PEOPLE IN HIS OWN WAY.
MMM...
... MMM
SO IT WAS HE WHO KISSED ME ON THE MOUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME.
. . . THROUGH MOMO, I GOT TO KNOW THIERRY AND OLIVIER, TWO SWISS ORPHANS WHO WERE LIVING IN AUSTRIA WITH THEIR UNCLE, A DIPLOMAT.
I'M ALSO A BIT OF AN ORPHAN.
YOUR PARENTS ARE DEAD?
NO, THEY'RE IN IRAN.
THE FACT THAT I WAS LIVING WITHOUT MY PARENTS ALSO SUITED JULIE.


AN ECCENTRIC, A PUNK, TWO ORPHANS AND A THIRD-WORLDER, WE MADE QUITE A GROUP OF FRIENDS. THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY STORY. ESPECIALLY MOMO! HE WAS FASCINATED BY DEATH.

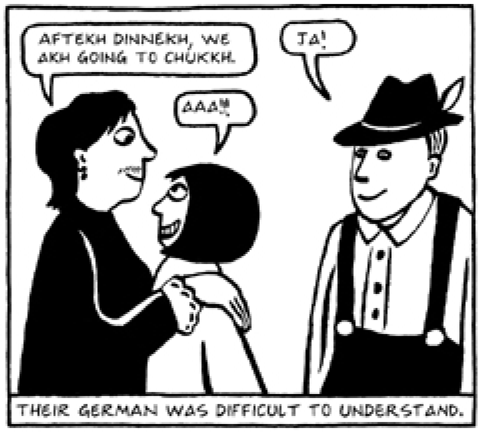

CHRISTMAS VACATION WAS APPROACHING. EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT THEIR PLANS.
I'M GOING TO BE BORED OUT OF MY MIND WITH MY PARENTS IN NICE.
FIJI
BORA BORA
CHICAGO
BARCELONA
HONDURAS
CHRISTMAS IS AN AMERICAN INVENTION. A SANTA CLAUS DECKED OUT IN RED AND WHITE WAS COCA-COLA'S MASCOT.
IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS.
I'M GOING BACK TO FRANCE TO SEE MY FATHER.
I'M GOING TO MY GRANDMOTHER'S IN SALZBURG. SHE'S THE ONLY ONE IN MY FAMILY WHO'S STILL BEARABLE.
WE'RE GOING TO BE BORED CRAZY IN THE ALPS.
YEAH, WE'RE GOING SKIING. IT'LL BE COOL!
YOU KNOW, IN IRAN WE DON'T CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS . . .
YOU'RE GOING SKIING? THAT'S SO GREAT!
IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
Our new year is march 21, the ...
YES.
I'LL BE IN ANNECY. WE'LL BE NEIGHBORS. WE COULD MAYBE SEE EACH OTHER.


FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1984. THE STREETS WERE PACKED. THE HOLIDAY FRENZY HAD INFECTED EVERYONE. I THOUGHT OF THIERRY WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT IT BEING "GOOD FOR BUSINESS."
MY STREET, THOUGH, WAS DESERTED. THERE WEREN'T ANY STORES.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ALL ALONE FOR TWO WEEKS? EVEN THE BOARDING HOUSE WILL BE EMPTY.
WHEN I GOT BACK, I FOUND LUCIA. STILL FAITHFUL TO HER POST.
ARE YOU OKAY?


YOU DON'T SEEM OKAY. I KNOW! IT'S NOT EASY TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITHOUT YOUR FAMILY.
CHRISTMAS? NO, IT'S NOT THAT.
TOMORROW, I'M LEAVING WITH MY AUNT. I THINK THERE'LL BE ROOM IN THE CAR. IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN COME WITH US.
WHERE?
TO THE TYROL!
TYROL?
♫ TYRLIA, TYRLIO, TYRL HOU! HOU! ♫♪
HA! HA! HA!
YOU KNOW, IF YOU COME, YOU MUSTN'T TALK ABOUT KLAUS.
KLAUS?
MY BOYFRIEND.
AH!
LUCIA'S FAMILY WAS VERY STRICTLY CATHOLIC.
IF YOU WANT ME TO KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT, YOU HAVE TO STOP WAKING ME UP WITH YOUR HAIR DRYER.
JAWOHL!
THE NEXT DAY, LUCIA'S AUNT CAME TO PICK US UP.
LET'S GO, GIRLS.
AND WE WERE OFF TO THE SOUTHWEST OF AUSTRIA.

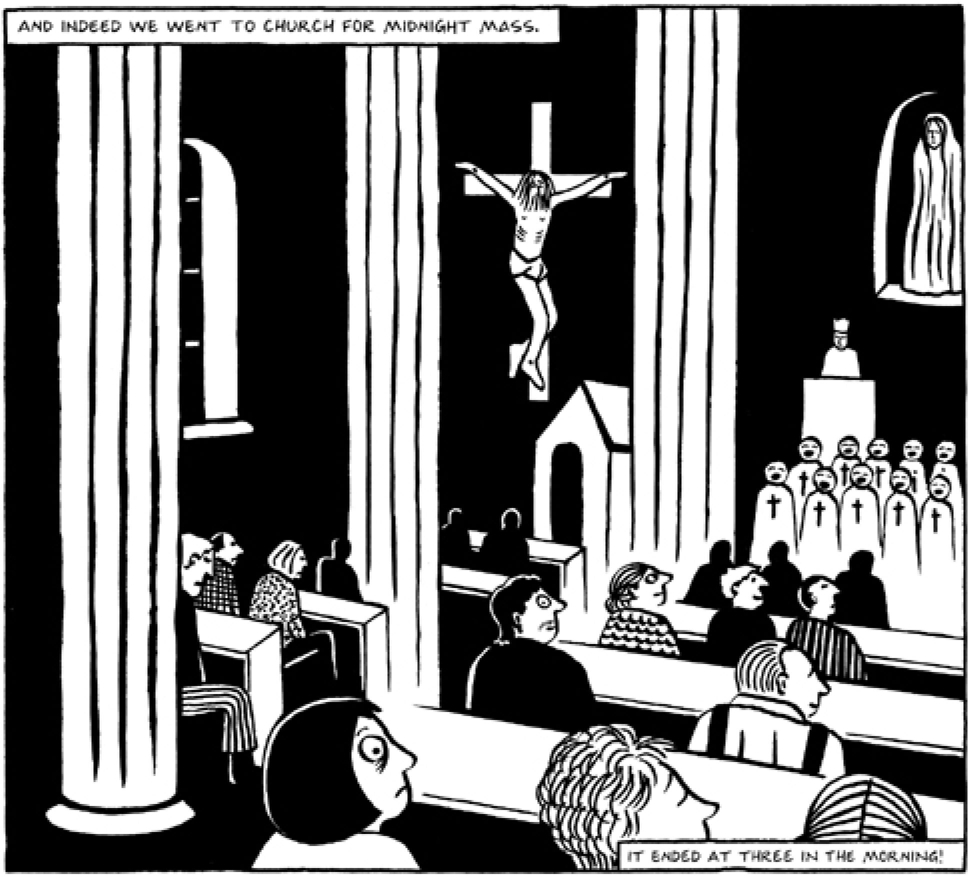


LUCIA'S PARENTS WERE INCREDIBLE. THEY WERE UNLIKE ANYONE I'D EVER MET. HER TYROLEAN AUSTRIAN FATHER WORE PANTS MADE OF LEATHER. HER TYROLEAN ITALIAN MOTHER HAD A MUSTACHE. ONLY HER SISTER REMINDED ME OF HEIDI.

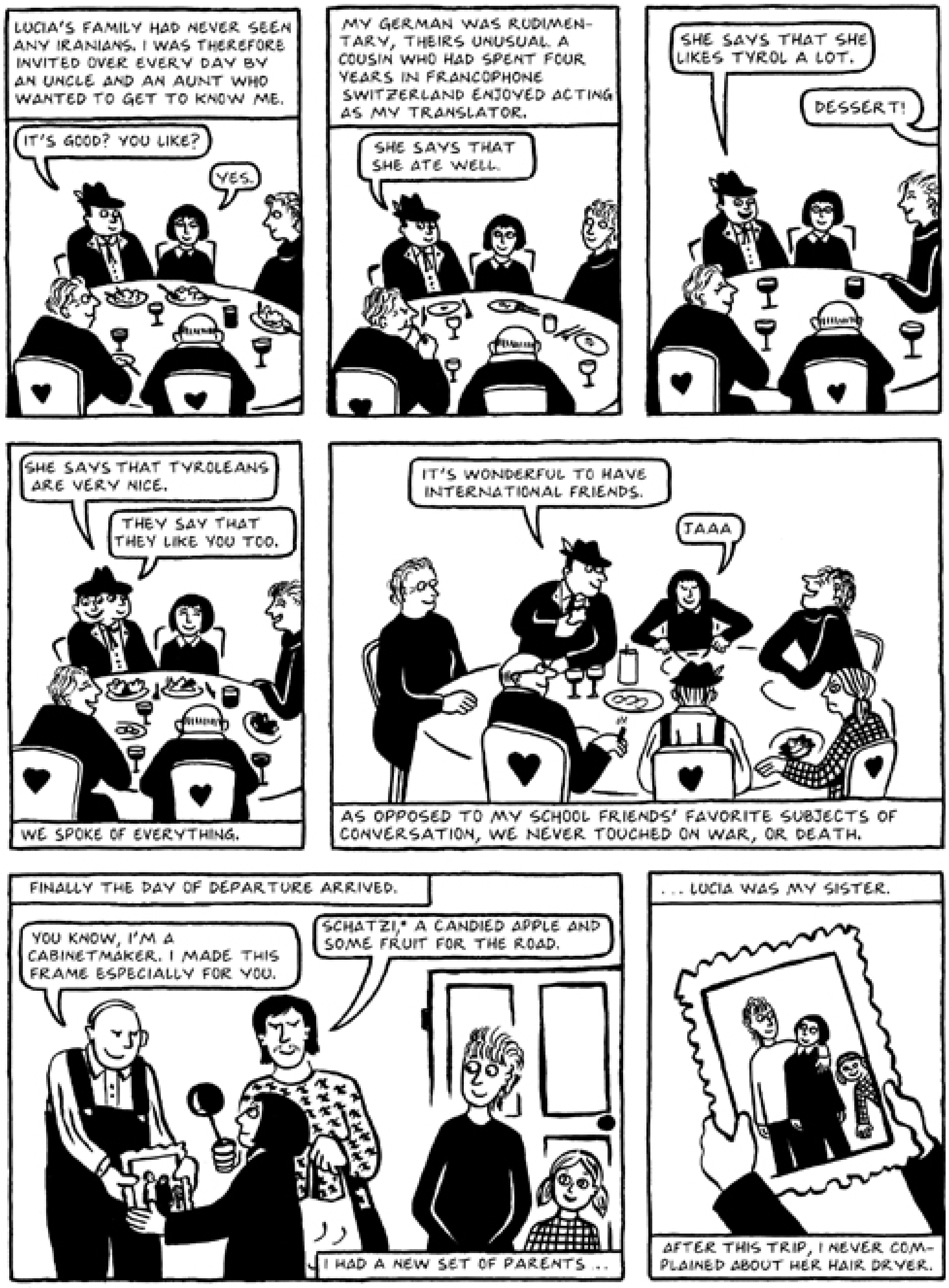

AFTEKH DINNEKH, WE AKH GOING TO CHUKKH.
JA!
AAA!!

THEIR GERMAN WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

AND INDEED WE WENT TO CHURCH FOR MIDNIGHT MASS.

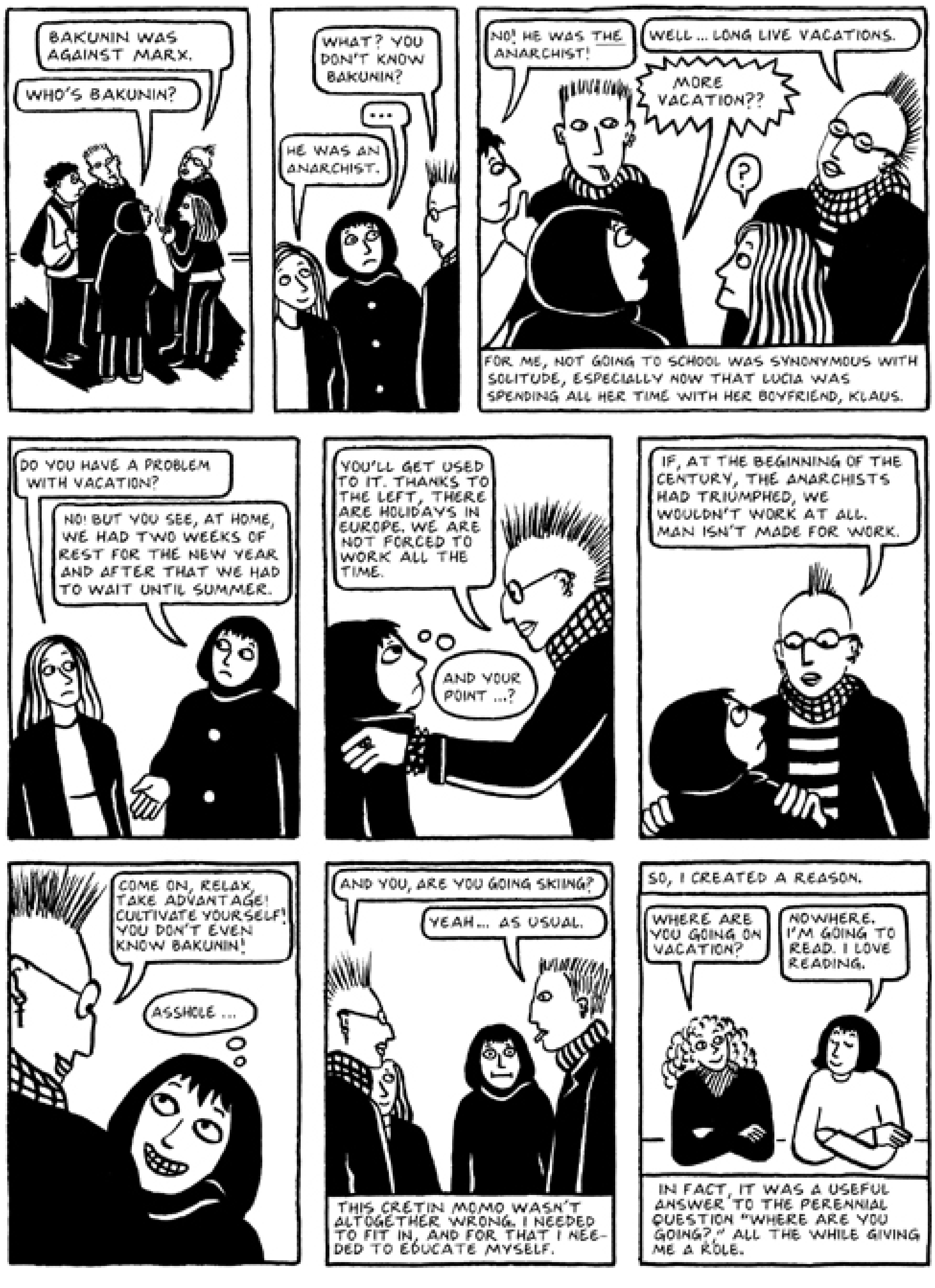


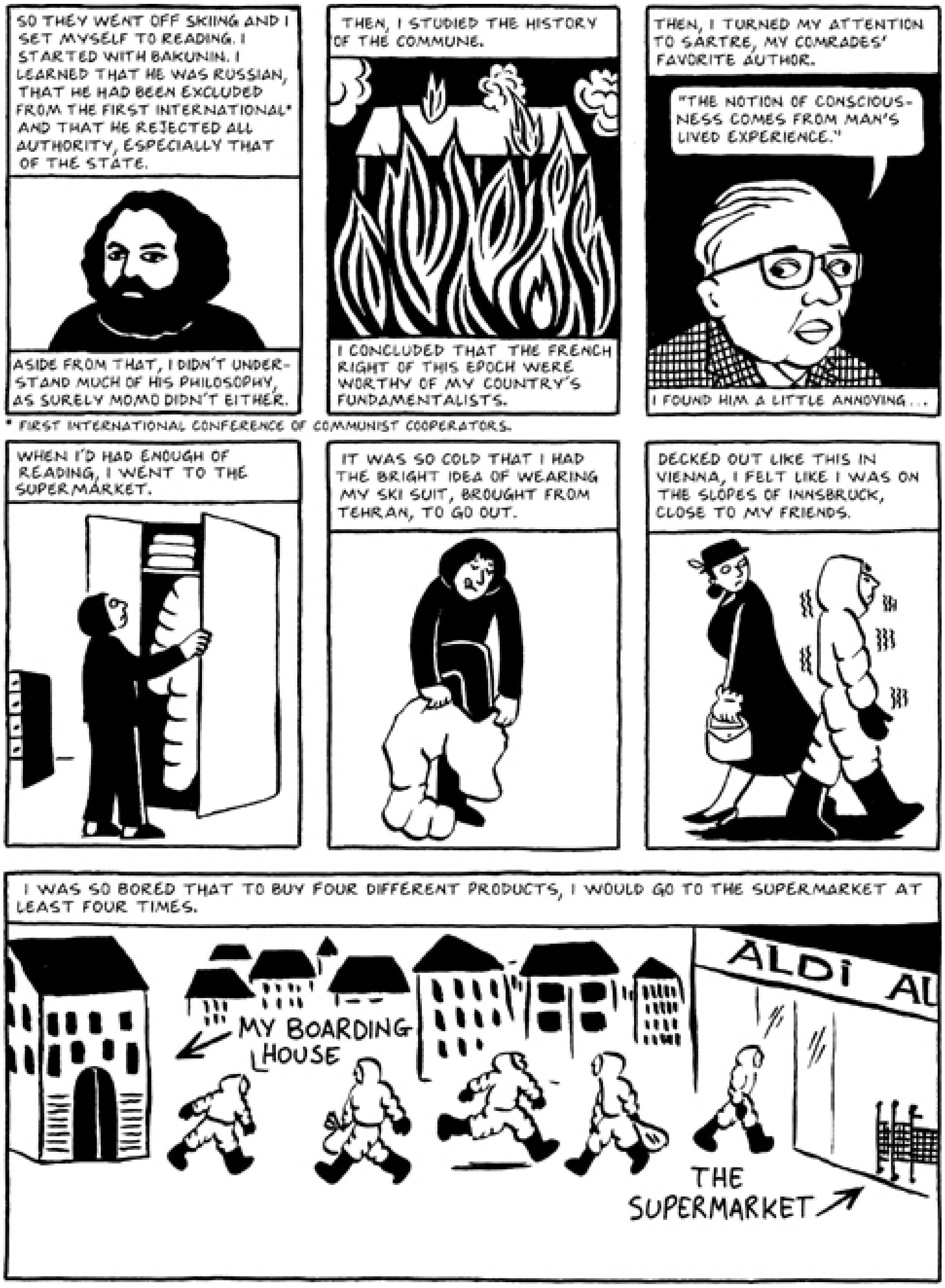
IT ENDED AT THREE IN THE MORNING!


LUCIA'S FAMILY HAD NEVER SEEN ANY IRANIANS. I WAS THEREFORE INVITED OVER EVERY DAY BY AN UNCLE AND AN AUNT WHO WANTED TO GET TO KNOW ME.
IT'S GOOD? YOU LIKE?
YES.
MY GERMAN WAS RUDIMENTARY, THEIRS UNUSUAL. A COUSIN WHO HAD SPENT FOUR YEARS IN FRANCOPHONE SWITZERLAND ENJOYED ACTING AS MY TRANSLATOR.
SHE SAYS THAT SHE ATE WELL.
SHE SAYS THAT SHE LIKES TYROL A LOT.
DESSERT!
SHE SAYS THAT TYROLEANS ARE VERY NICE.
THEY SAY THAT THEY LIKE YOU TOO.
WE SPOKE OF EVERYTHING.
IT'S WONDERFUL TO HAVE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS.
TAAA
AS OPPOSED TO MY SCHOOL FRIENDS' FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSATION, WE NEVER TOUCHED ON WAR, OR DEATH.
FINALLY THE DAY OF DEPARTURE ARRIVED.
YOU KNOW, I'M A CABINETMAKER. I MADE THIS FRAME ESPECIALLY FOR YOU.
SCHATZI,* A CANDIED APPLE AND SOME FRUIT FOR THE ROAD.
I HAD A NEW SET OF PARENTS ...
... LUCIA WAS MY SISTER.
AFTER THIS TRIP, I NEVER COMPLAINED ABOUT HER HAIR DRYER.

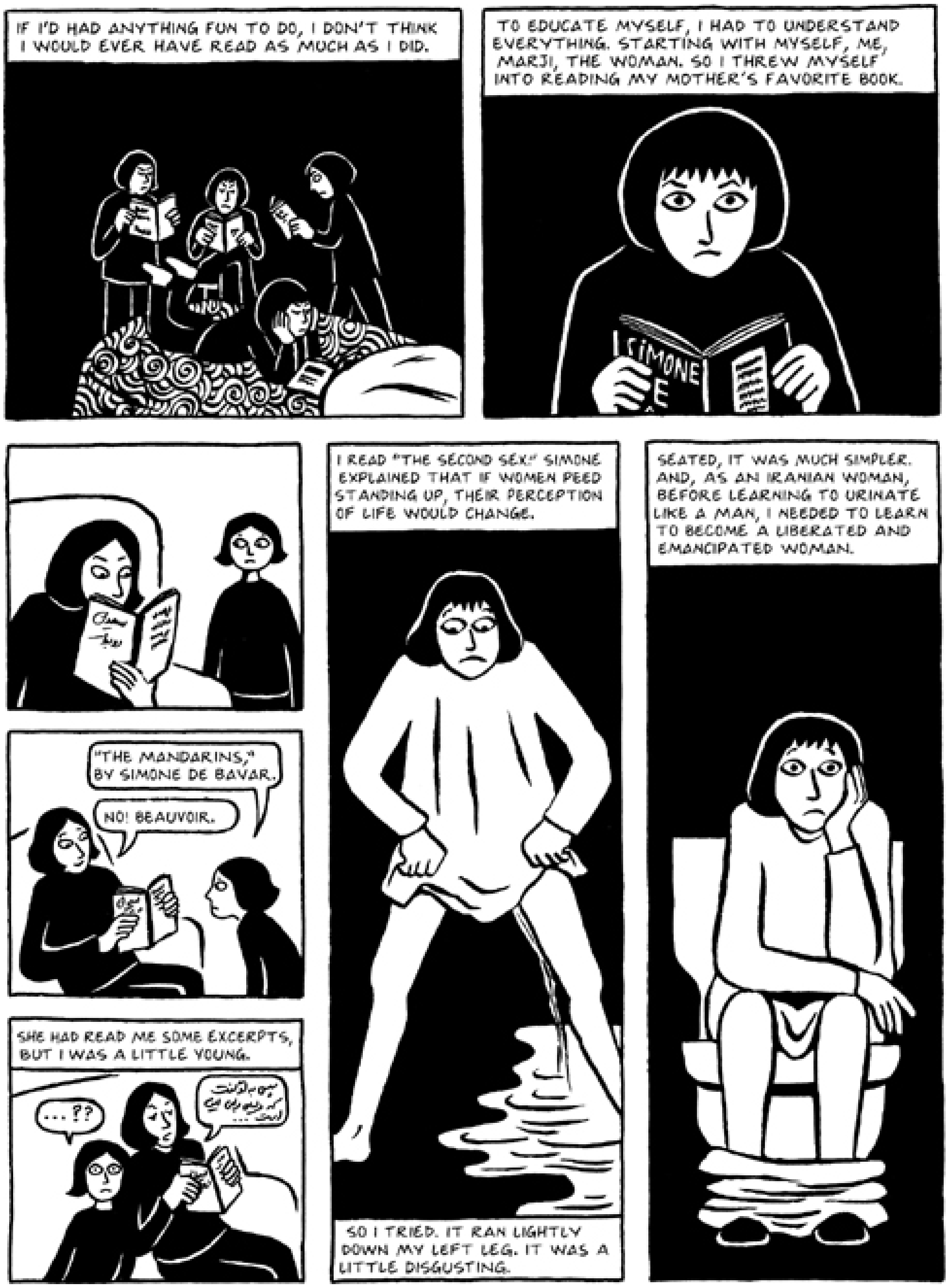
* DEAR

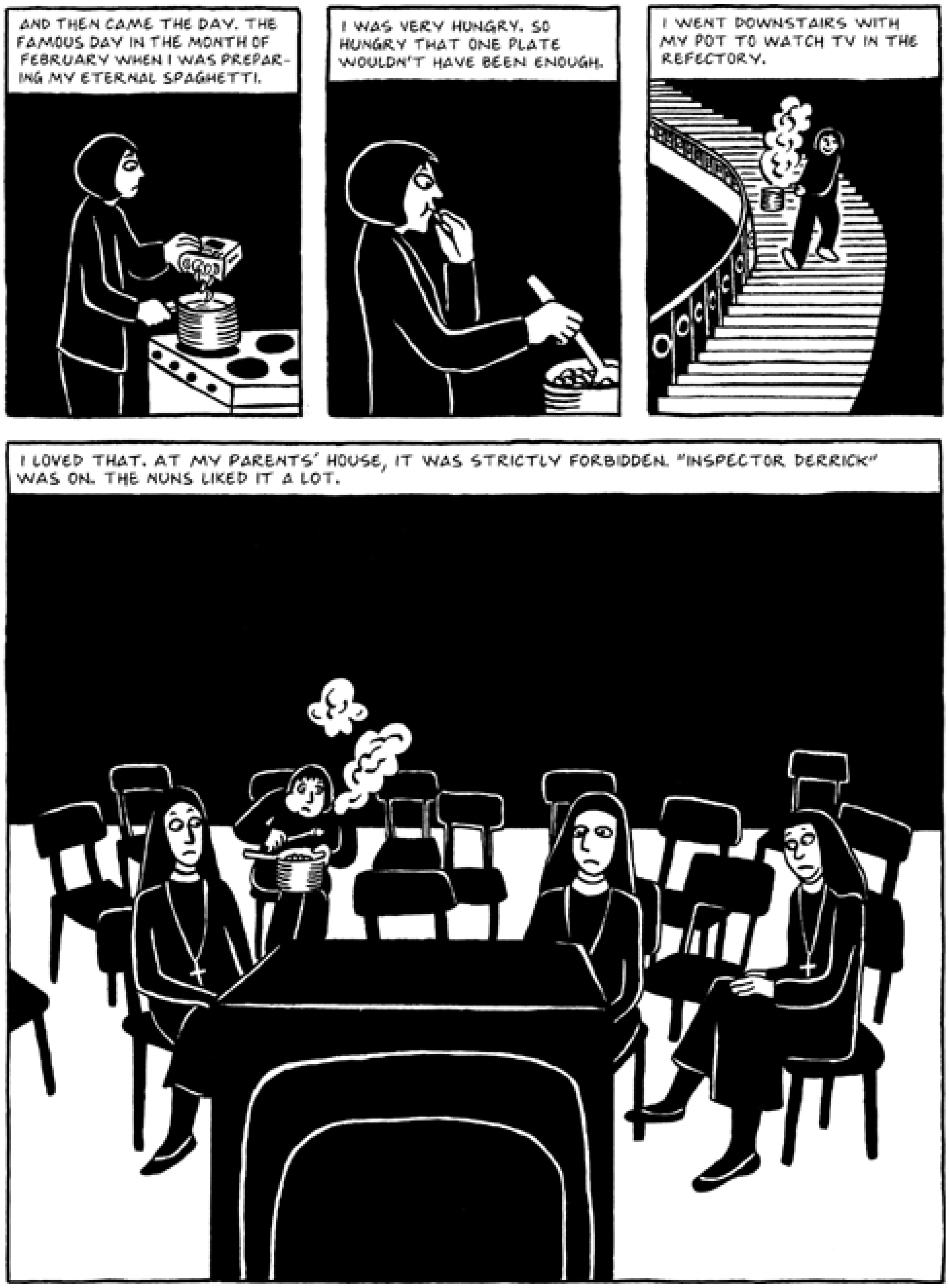
# PASTA

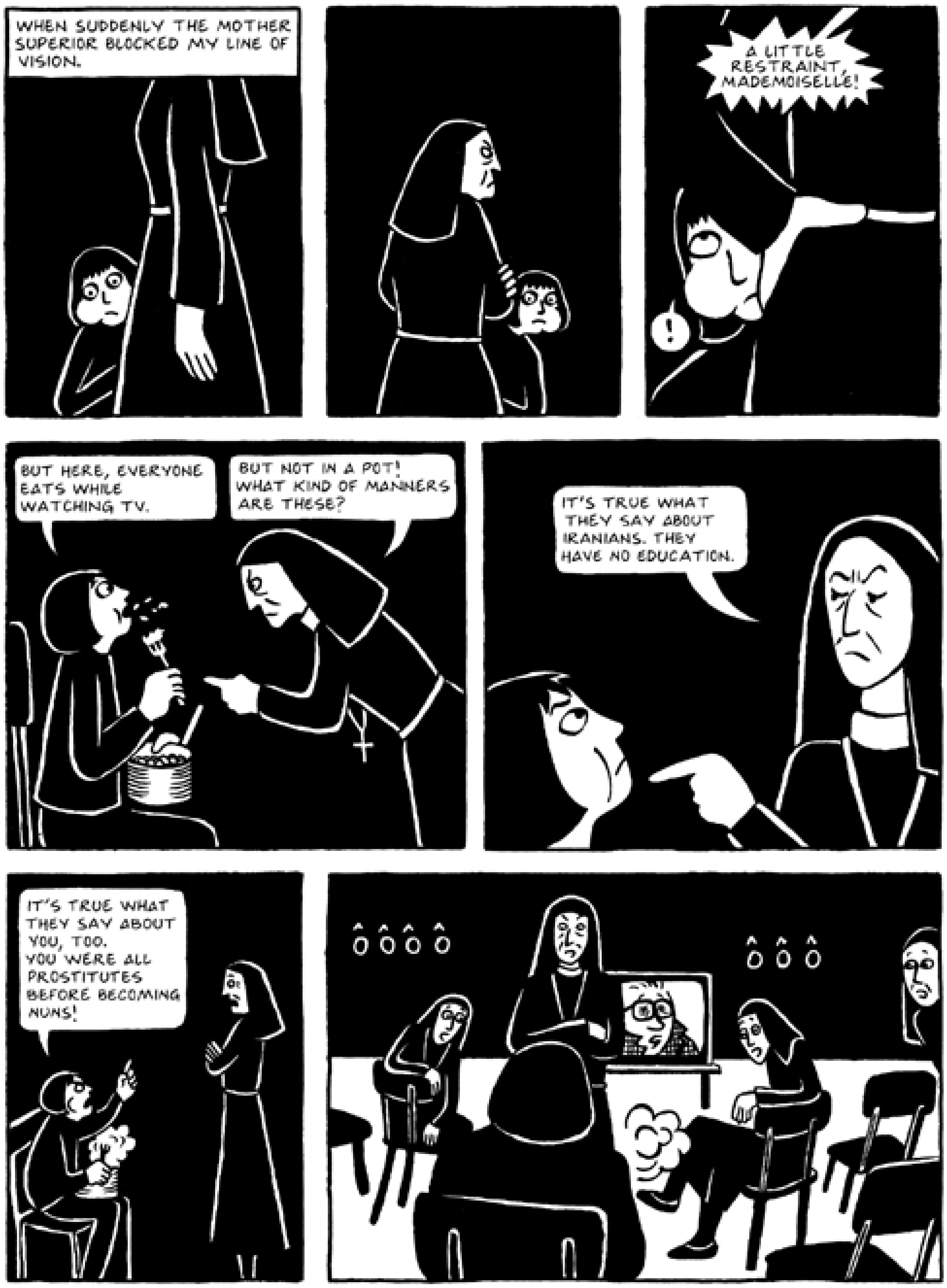

BAKUNIN WAS AGAINST MARX.
WHO'S BAKUNIN?
WHAT? YOU DON'T KNOW BAKUNIN?
...
HE WAS AN ANARCHIST.
NO! HE WAS THE ANARCHIST!
WELL ... LONG LIVE VACATIONS.
MORE VACATION??
?
FOR ME, NOT GOING TO SCHOOL WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH SOLITUDE, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT LUCIA WAS SPENDING ALL HER TIME WITH HER BOYFRIEND, KLAUS.
DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH VACATION?
NO! BUT YOU SEE, AT HOME, WE HAD TWO WEEKS OF REST FOR THE NEW YEAR AND AFTER THAT WE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL SUMMER.
YOU'LL GET USED TO IT. THANKS TO THE LEFT, THERE ARE HOLIDAYS IN EUROPE. WE ARE NOT FORCED TO WORK ALL THE TIME.
AND YOUR POINT ...?
IF, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY, THE ANARCHISTS HAD TRIUMPHED, WE WOULDN'T WORK AT ALL. MAN ISN'T MADE FOR WORK.
COME ON, RELAX, TAKE ADVANTAGE! CULTIVATE YOURSELF! YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW BAKUNIN!
ASSHOLE ...
AND YOU, ARE YOU GOING SKIING?
YEAH... AS USUAL.
THIS CRETIN MOMO WASN'T ALTOGETHER WRONG. I NEEDED TO FIT IN, AND FOR THAT I NEEDED TO EDUCATE MYSELF.
SO, I CREATED A REASON.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING ON VACATION?
NOWHERE. I'M GOING TO READ. I LOVE READING.
IN FACT, IT WAS A USEFUL ANSWER TO THE PERENNIAL QUESTION "WHERE ARE YOU GOING?," ALL THE WHILE GIVING ME A RÔLE.

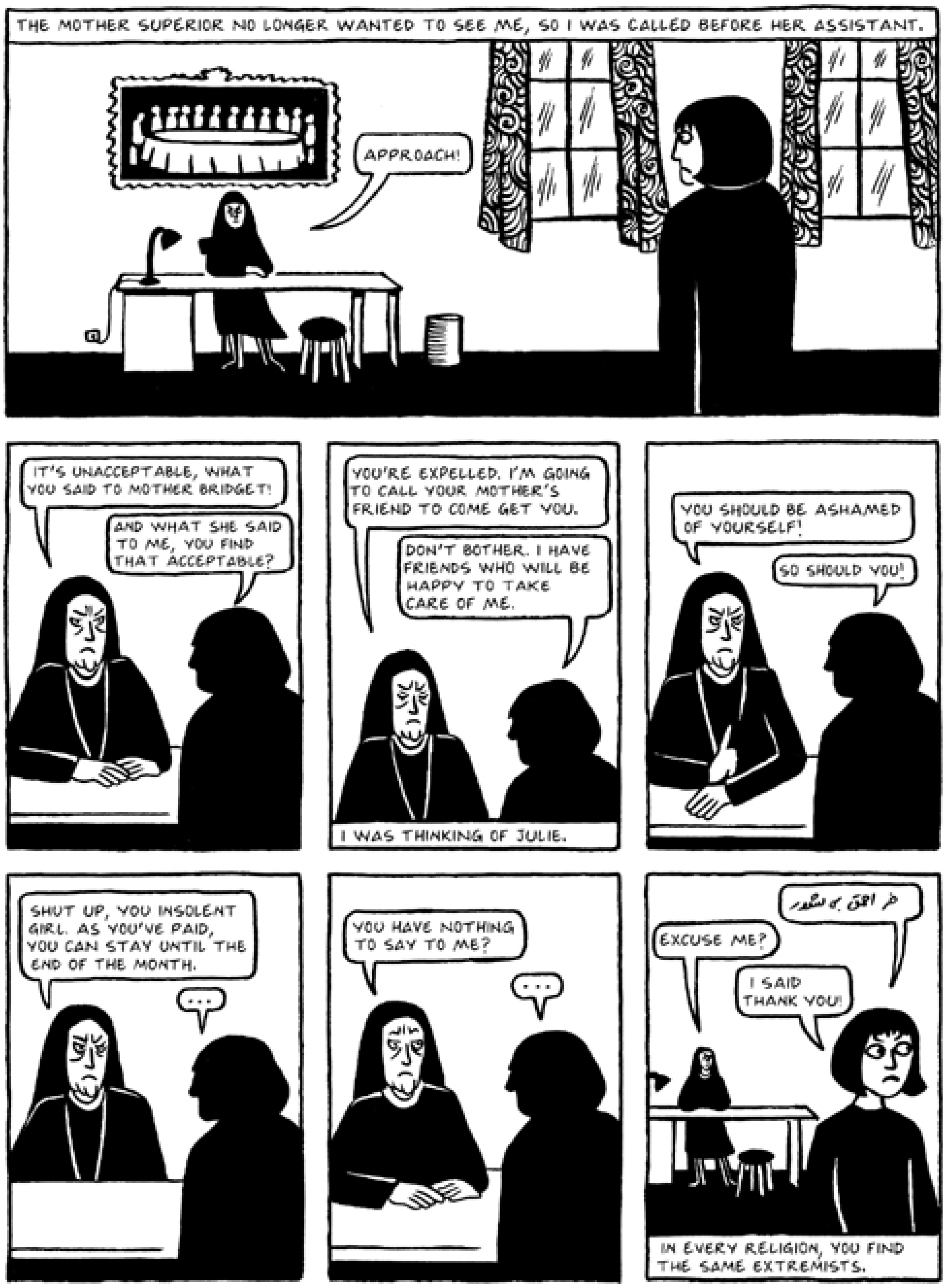

SO THEY WENT OFF SKIING AND I SET MYSELF TO READING. I STARTED WITH BAKUNIN. I LEARNED THAT HE WAS RUSSIAN, THAT HE HAD BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL* AND THAT HE REJECTED ALL AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE STATE.
ASIDE FROM THAT, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, AS SURELY MOMO DIDN'T EITHER.
THEN, I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE.
I CONCLUDED THAT THE FRENCH RIGHT OF THIS EPOCH WERE WORTHY OF MY COUNTRY'S FUNDAMENTALISTS.
THEN, I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO SARTRE, MY COMRADES' FAVORITE AUTHOR.
"THE NOTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS COMES FROM MAN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE."
I FOUND HIM A LITTLE ANNOYING...
WHEN I'D HAD ENOUGH OF READING, I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.
IT WAS SO COLD THAT I HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA OF WEARING MY SKI SUIT, BROUGHT FROM TEHRAN, TO GO OUT.
DECKED OUT LIKE THIS IN VIENNA, I FELT LIKE I WAS ON THE SLOPES OF INNSBRUCK, CLOSE TO MY FRIENDS.
I WAS SO BORED THAT TO BUY FOUR DIFFERENT PRODUCTS, I WOULD GO TO THE SUPERMARKET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES.
ALDI AL
MY BOARDING HOUSE
THE SUPERMARKET

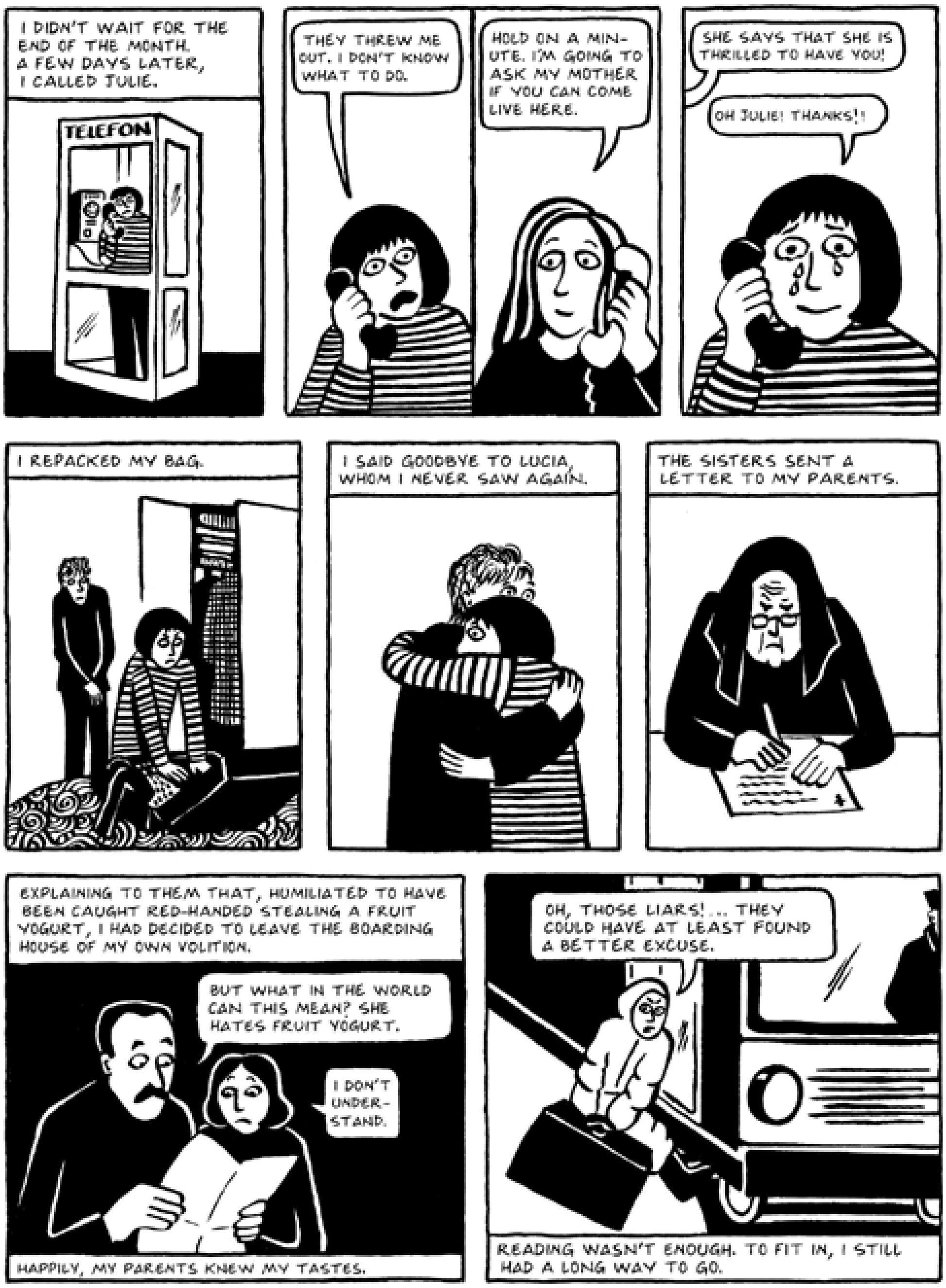
* FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST COOPERATORS.


IF I'D HAD ANYTHING FUN TO DO, I DON'T THINK I WOULD EVER HAVE READ AS MUCH AS I DID.
TO EDUCATE MYSELF, I HAD TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. STARTING WITH MYSELF, ME, MARJI, THE WOMAN. SO I THREW MYSELF INTO READING MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE BOOK.
SIMONE
E
"THE MANDARINS," BY SIMONE DE BAVAR.
NO! BEAUVOIR.
SHE HAD READ ME SOME EXCERPTS, BUT I WAS A LITTLE YOUNG.
...??
I READ "THE SECOND SEX." SIMONE EXPLAINED THAT IF WOMEN PEED STANDING UP, THEIR PERCEPTION OF LIFE WOULD CHANGE.
SO I TRIED. IT RAN LIGHTLY DOWN MY LEFT LEG. IT WAS A LITTLE DISGUSTING.
SEATED, IT WAS MUCH SIMPLER. AND, AS AN IRANIAN WOMAN, BEFORE LEARNING TO URINATE LIKE A MAN, I NEEDED TO LEARN TO BECOME A LIBERATED AND EMANCIPATED WOMAN.

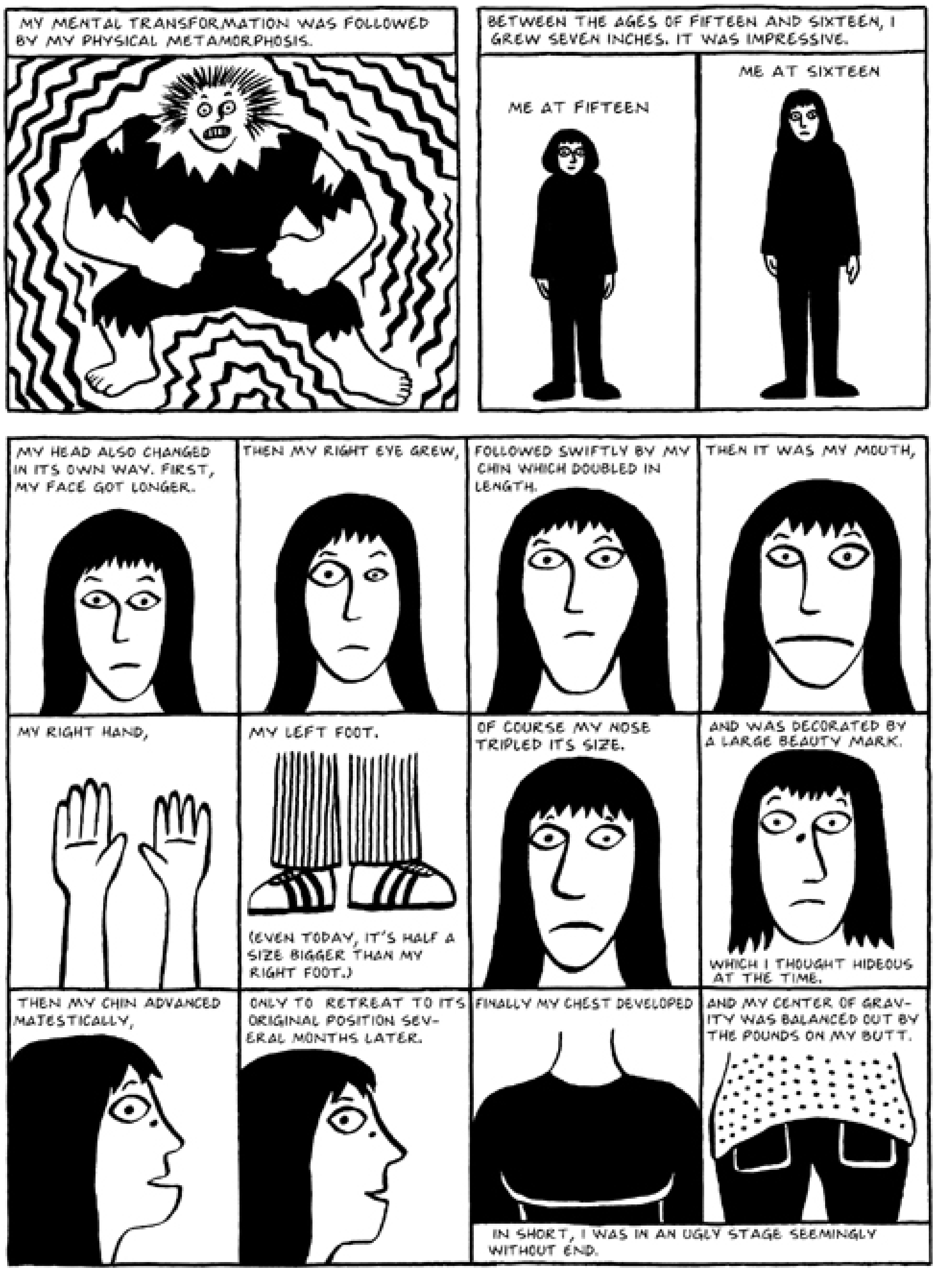

AND THEN CAME THE DAY. THE FAMOUS DAY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WHEN I WAS PREPARING MY ETERNAL SPAGHETTI.
I WAS VERY HUNGRY. SO HUNGRY THAT ONE PLATE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH.
I WENT DOWNSTAIRS WITH MY POT TO WATCH TV IN THE REFECTORY.
I LOVED THAT. AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE, IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. "INSPECTOR DERRICK" WAS ON. THE NUNS LIKED IT A LOT.

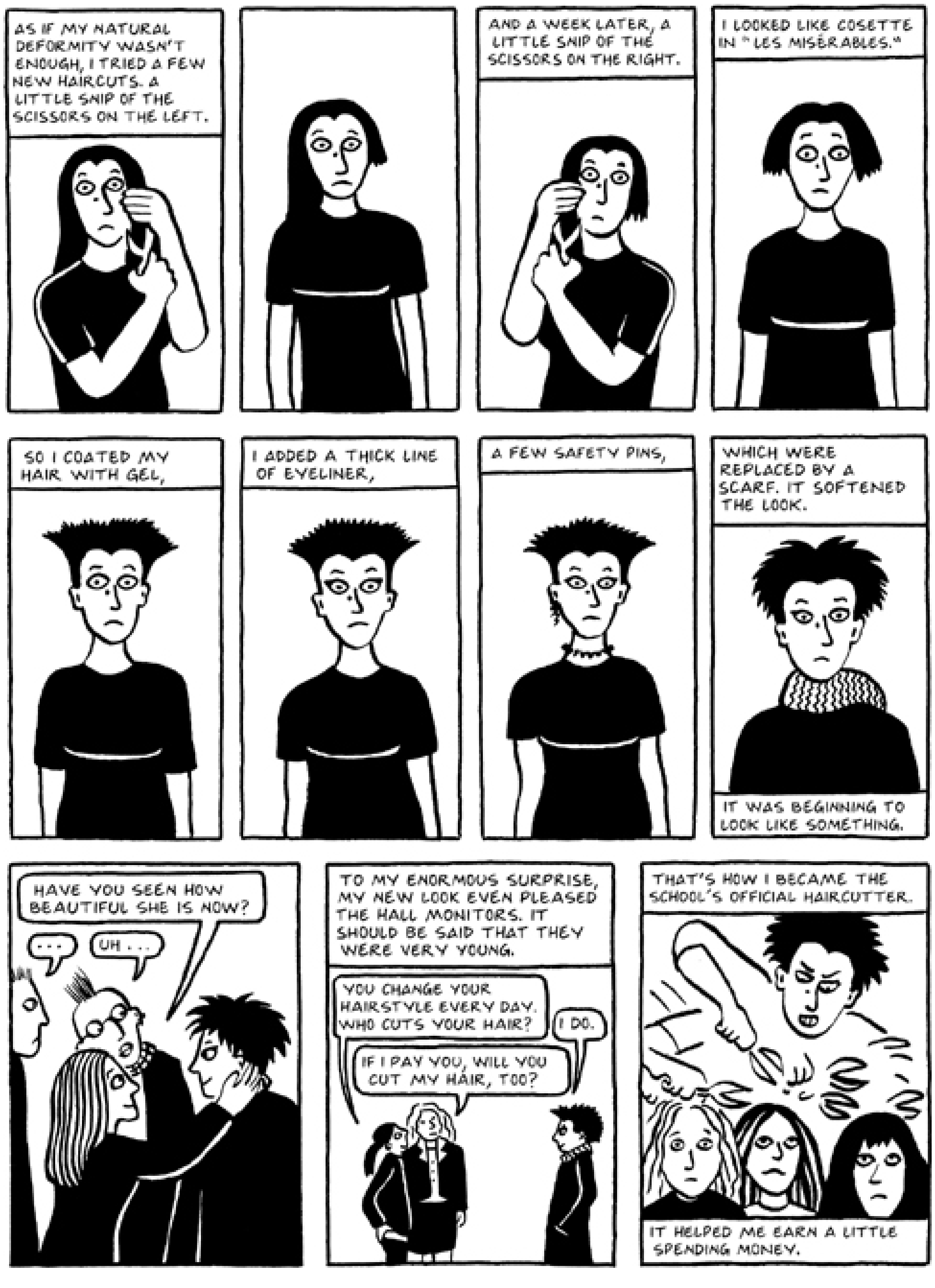

WHEN SUDDENLY THE MOTHER SUPERIOR BLOCKED MY LINE OF VISION.
A LITTLE RESTRAINT, MADEMOISELLE!
!
BUT HERE, EVERYONE EATS WHILE WATCHING TV.
BUT NOT IN A POT! WHAT KIND OF MANNERS ARE THESE?
IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IRANIANS. THEY HAVE NO EDUCATION.
IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU, TOO. YOU WERE ALL PROSTITUTES BEFORE BECOMING NUNS!

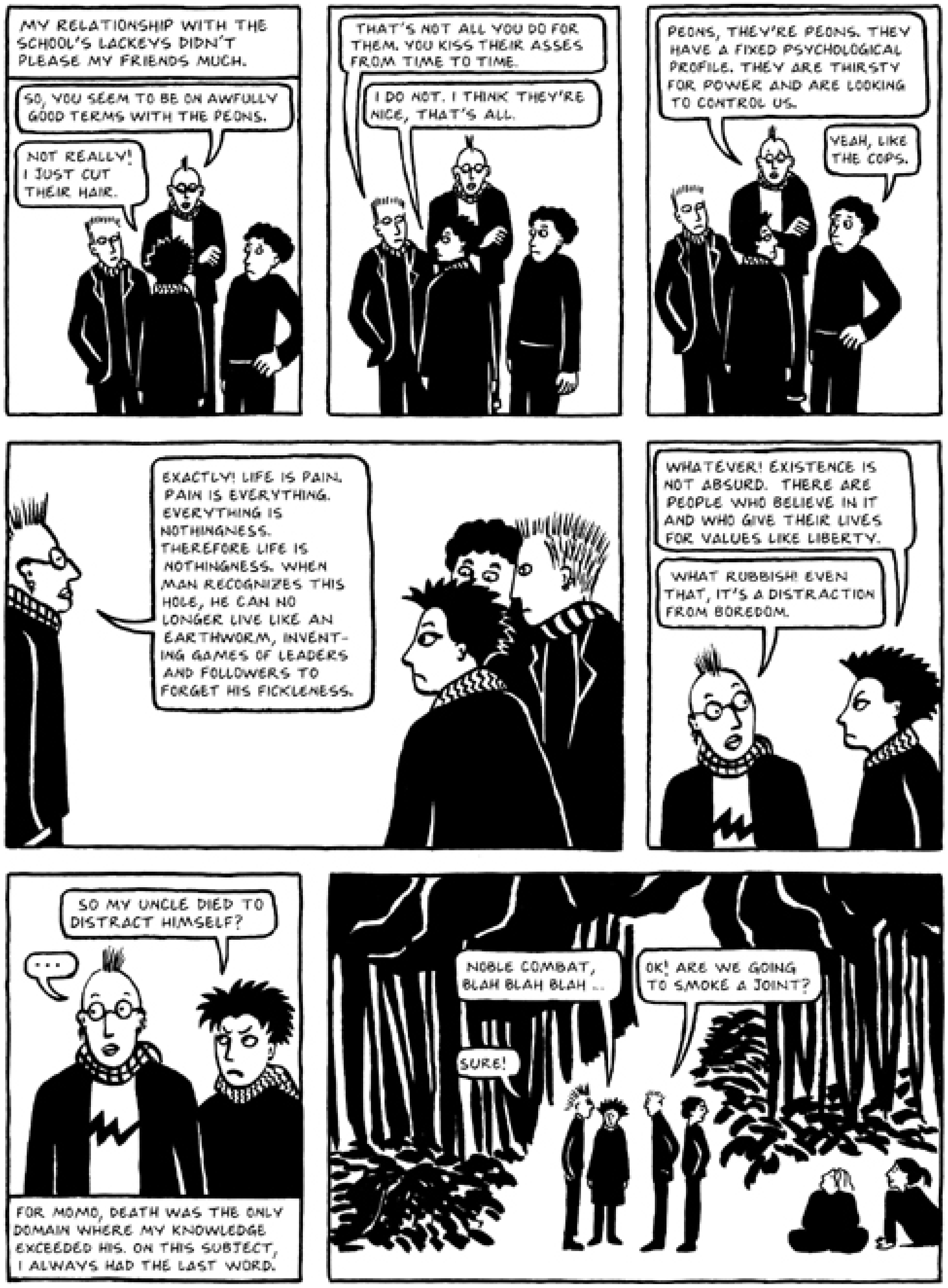

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE ME, SO I WAS CALLED BEFORE HER ASSISTANT.
APPROACH!
IT'S UNACCEPTABLE, WHAT YOU SAID TO MOTHER BRIDGET!
AND WHAT SHE SAID TO ME, YOU FIND THAT ACCEPTABLE?
YOU'RE EXPELLED. I'M GOING TO CALL YOUR MOTHER'S FRIEND TO COME GET YOU.
DON'T BOTHER. I HAVE FRIENDS WHO WILL BE HAPPY TO TAKE CARE OF ME.
I WAS THINKING OF JULIE.
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF!
SO SHOULD YOU!
SHUT UP, YOU INSOLENT GIRL. AS YOU'VE PAID, YOU CAN STAY UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH.
...
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO ME?
...
خر احق بی شعور
EXCUSE ME?
I SAID THANK YOU!
IN EVERY RELIGION, YOU FIND THE SAME EXTREMISTS.

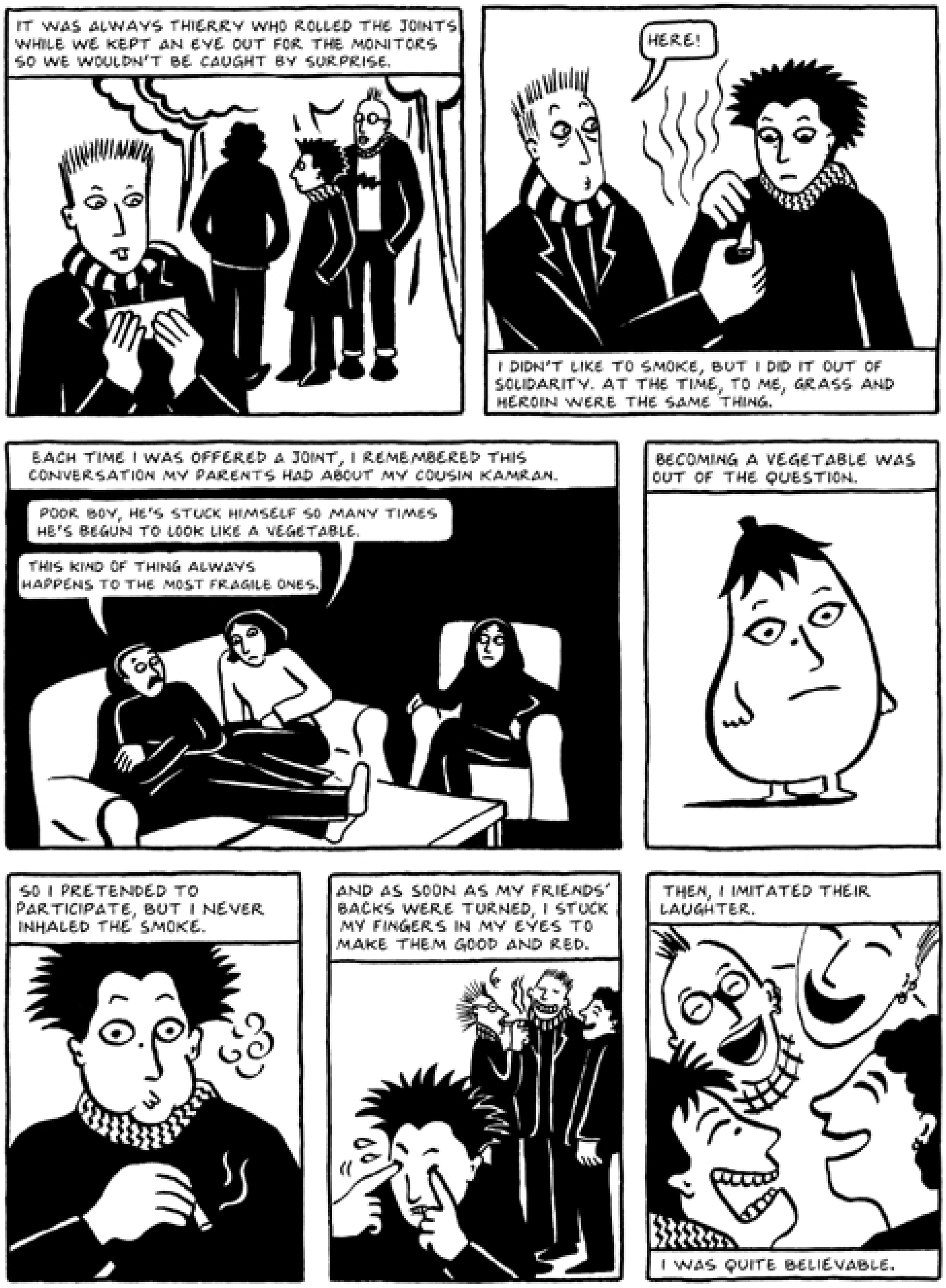

I DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE END OF THE MONTH. A FEW DAYS LATER, I CALLED JULIE.
TELEFON
THEY THREW ME OUT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
HOLD ON A MINUTE. I'M GOING TO ASK MY MOTHER IF YOU CAN COME LIVE HERE.
SHE SAYS THAT SHE IS THRILLED TO HAVE YOU!
OH JULIE! THANKS!!
I REPACKED MY BAG.
I SAID GOODBYE TO LUCIA, WHOM I NEVER SAW AGAIN.
THE SISTERS SENT A LETTER TO MY PARENTS.
EXPLAINING TO THEM THAT, HUMILIATED TO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT RED-HANDED STEALING A FRUIT YOGURT, I HAD DECIDED TO LEAVE THE BOARDING HOUSE OF MY OWN VOLITION.
BUT WHAT IN THE WORLD CAN THIS MEAN? SHE HATES FRUIT YOGURT.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HAPPILY, MY PARENTS KNEW MY TASTES.
OH, THOSE LIARS!... THEY COULD HAVE AT LEAST FOUND A BETTER EXCUSE.
READING WASN'T ENOUGH. TO FIT IN, I STILL HAD A LONG WAY TO GO.

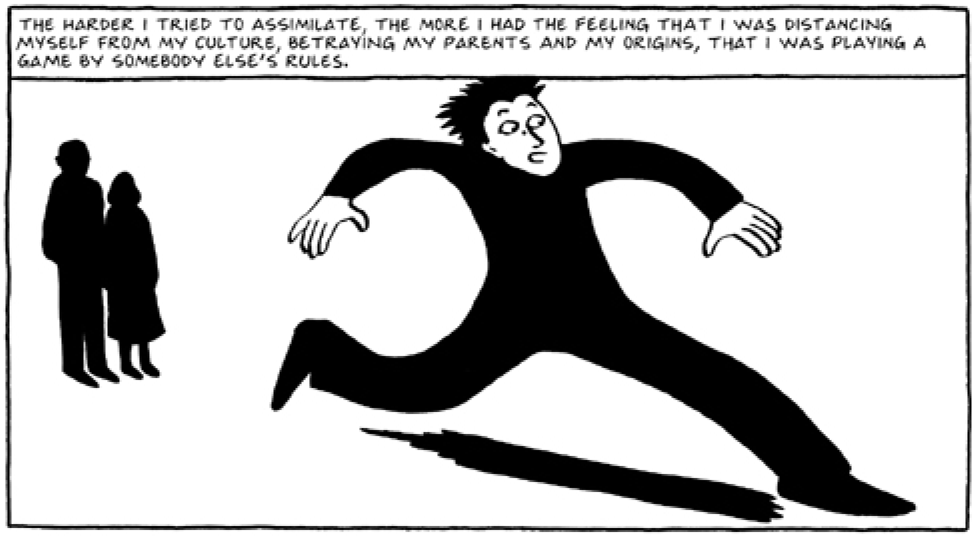
# THE VEGETABLE

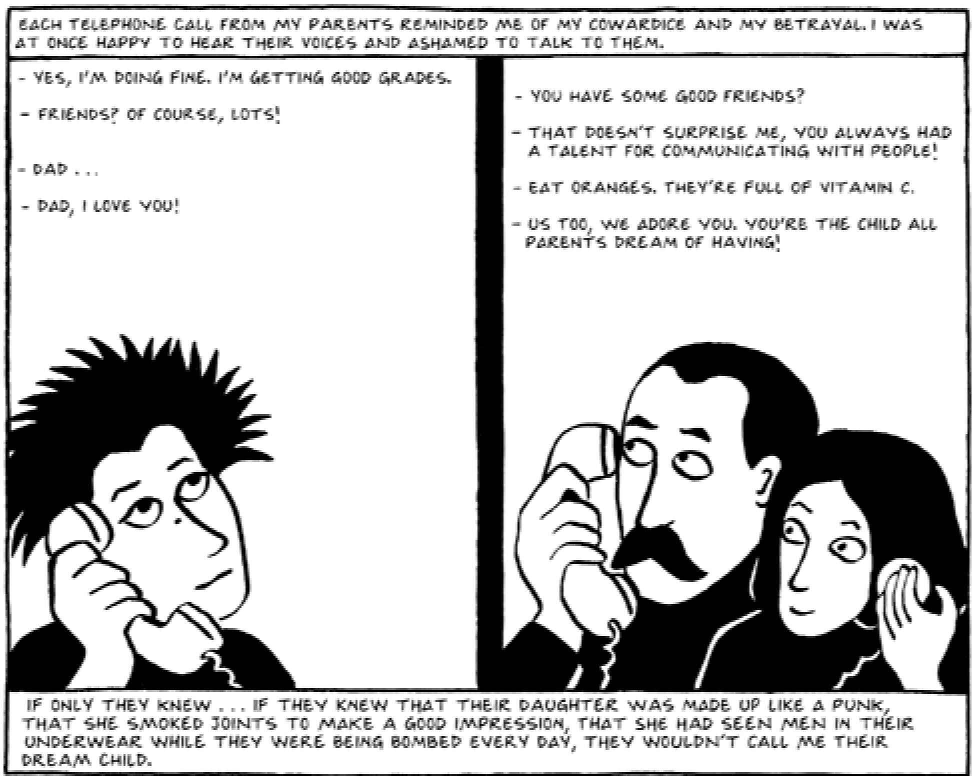

MY MENTAL TRANSFORMATION WAS FOLLOWED BY MY PHYSICAL METAMORPHOSIS.
BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN, I GREW SEVEN INCHES. IT WAS IMPRESSIVE.
ME AT FIFTEEN
ME AT SIXTEEN
MY HEAD ALSO CHANGED IN ITS OWN WAY. FIRST, MY FACE GOT LONGER.
THEN MY RIGHT EYE GREW,
FOLLOWED SWIFTLY BY MY CHIN WHICH DOUBLED IN LENGTH.
THEN IT WAS MY MOUTH,
MY RIGHT HAND,
MY LEFT FOOT.
(EVEN TODAY, IT'S HALF A SIZE BIGGER THAN MY RIGHT FOOT.)
OF COURSE MY NOSE TRIPLED ITS SIZE.
AND WAS DECORATED BY A LARGE BEAUTY MARK.
WHICH I THOUGHT HIDEOUS AT THE TIME.
THEN MY CHIN ADVANCED MAJESTICALLY,
ONLY TO RETREAT TO ITS ORIGINAL POSITION SEVERAL MONTHS LATER.
FINALLY MY CHEST DEVELOPED
AND MY CENTER OF GRAVITY WAS BALANCED OUT BY THE POUNDS ON MY BUTT.
IN SHORT, I WAS IN AN UGLY STAGE SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END.

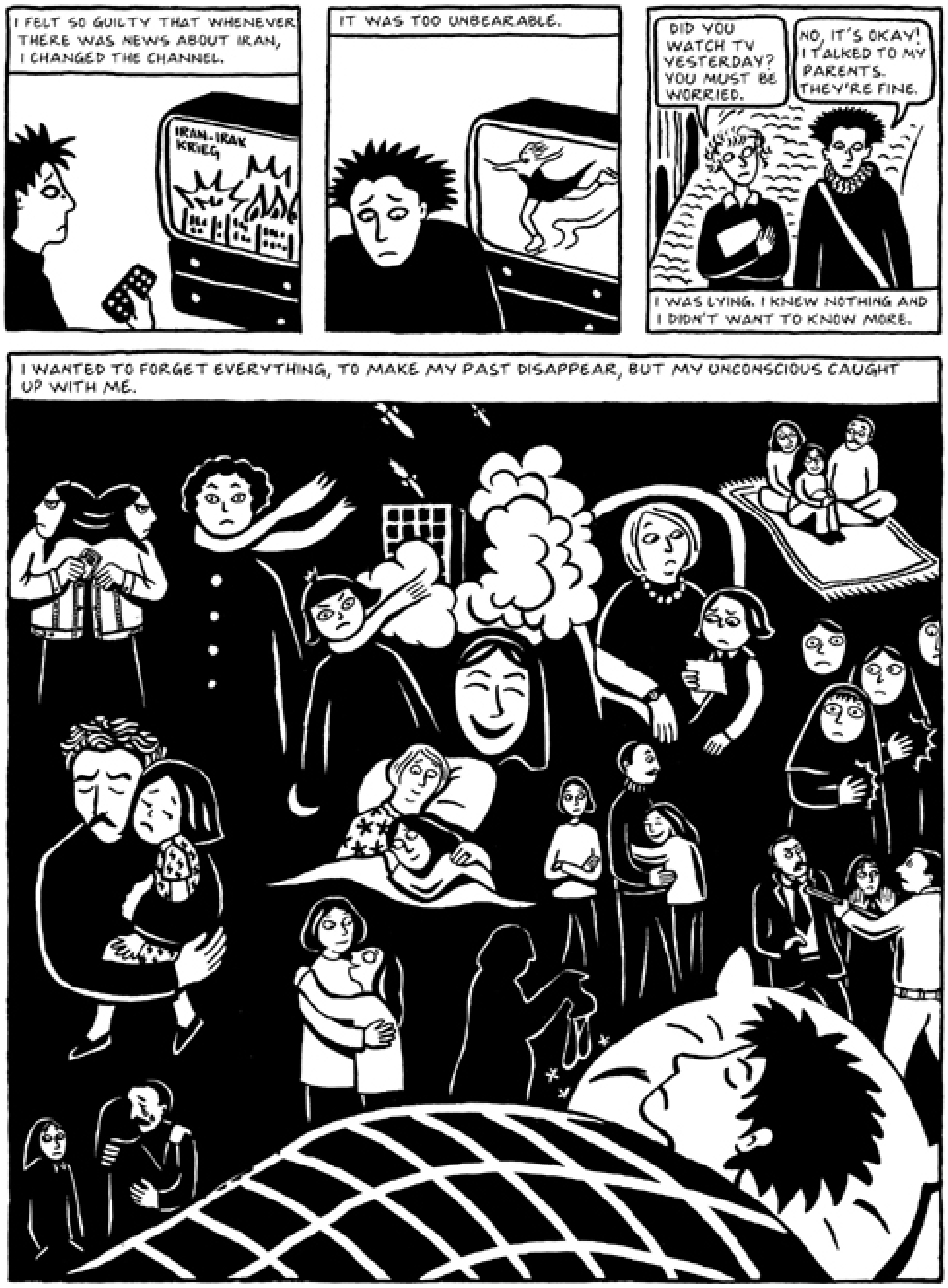

AS IF MY NATURAL DEFORMITY WASN'T ENOUGH, I TRIED A FEW NEW HAIRCUTS. A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE LEFT.
AND A WEEK LATER, A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE RIGHT.
I LOOKED LIKE COSETTE IN "LES MISÉRABLES."
SO I COATED MY HAIR WITH GEL,
I ADDED A THICK LINE OF EYELINER,
A FEW SAFETY PINS,
WHICH WERE REPLACED BY A SCARF. IT SOFTENED THE LOOK.
IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE SOMETHING.
HAVE YOU SEEN HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS NOW?
...
UH...
TO MY ENORMOUS SURPRISE, MY NEW LOOK EVEN PLEASED THE HALL MONITORS. IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THEY WERE VERY YOUNG.
YOU CHANGE YOUR HAIRSTYLE EVERY DAY. WHO CUTS YOUR HAIR?
I DO.
IF I PAY YOU, WILL YOU CUT MY HAIR, TOO?
THAT'S HOW I BECAME THE SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL HAIRCUTTER.
IT HELPED ME EARN A LITTLE SPENDING MONEY.

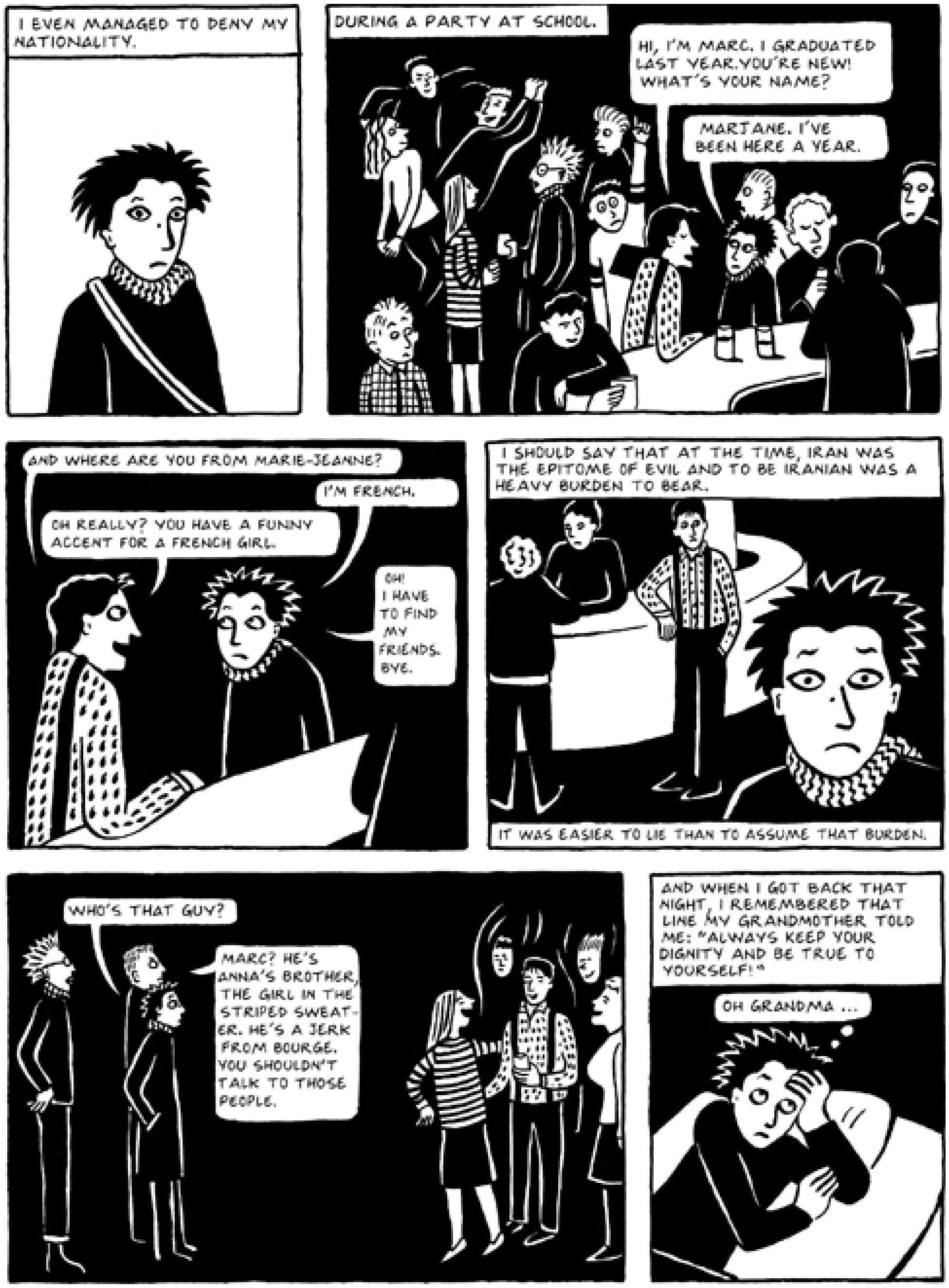

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL'S LACKEYS DIDN'T PLEASE MY FRIENDS MUCH.
SO, YOU SEEM TO BE ON AWFULLY GOOD TERMS WITH THE PEONS.
NOT REALLY! I JUST CUT THEIR HAIR.
THAT'S NOT ALL YOU DO FOR THEM. YOU KISS THEIR ASSES FROM TIME TO TIME.
I DO NOT. I THINK THEY'RE NICE, THAT'S ALL.
PEONS, THEY'RE PEONS. THEY HAVE A FIXED PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE. THEY ARE THIRSTY FOR POWER AND ARE LOOKING TO CONTROL US.
YEAH, LIKE THE COPS.
EXACTLY! LIFE IS PAIN. PAIN IS EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING IS NOTHINGNESS. THEREFORE LIFE IS NOTHINGNESS. WHEN MAN RECOGNIZES THIS HOLE, HE CAN NO LONGER LIVE LIKE AN EARTHWORM, INVENTING GAMES OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS TO FORGET HIS FICKLENESS.
WHATEVER! EXISTENCE IS NOT ABSURD. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN IT AND WHO GIVE THEIR LIVES FOR VALUES LIKE LIBERTY.
WHAT RUBBISH! EVEN THAT, IT'S A DISTRACTION FROM BOREDOM.
SO MY UNCLE DIED TO DISTRACT HIMSELF?
...
FOR MOMO, DEATH WAS THE ONLY DOMAIN WHERE MY KNOWLEDGE EXCEEDED HIS. ON THIS SUBJECT, I ALWAYS HAD THE LAST WORD.
NOBLE COMBAT, BLAH BLAH BLAH ...
OK! ARE WE GOING TO SMOKE A JOINT?
SURE!

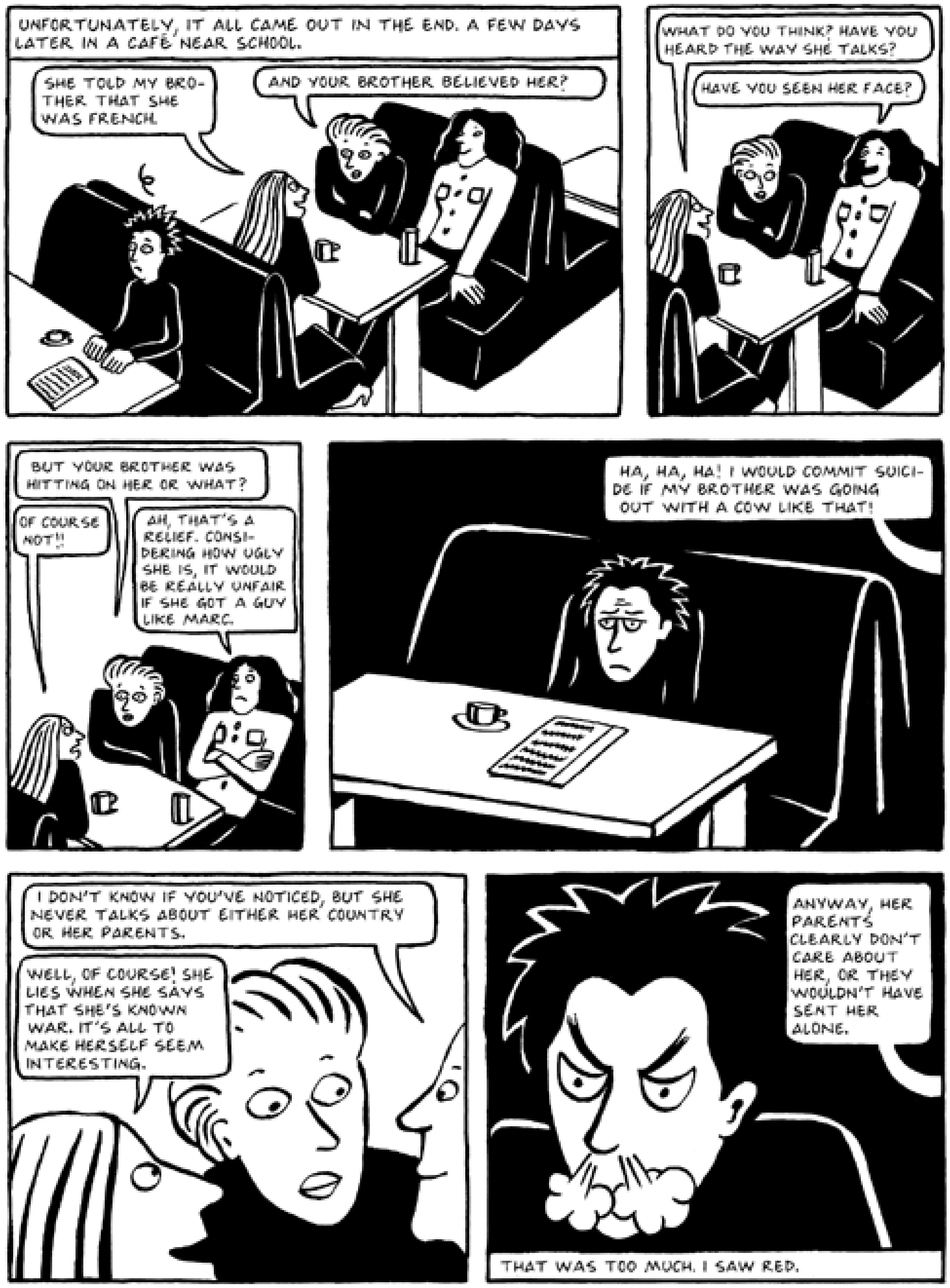

IT WAS ALWAYS THIERRY WHO ROLLED THE JOINTS WHILE WE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR THE MONITORS SO WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE.
HERE!
I DIDN'T LIKE TO SMOKE, BUT I DID IT OUT OF SOLIDARITY. AT THE TIME, TO ME, GRASS AND HEROIN WERE THE SAME THING.
EACH TIME I WAS OFFERED A JOINT, I REMEMBERED THIS CONVERSATION MY PARENTS HAD ABOUT MY COUSIN KAMRAN.
POOR BOY, HE'S STUCK HIMSELF SO MANY TIMES HE'S BEGUN TO LOOK LIKE A VEGETABLE.
THIS KIND OF THING ALWAYS HAPPENS TO THE MOST FRAGILE ONES.
BECOMING A VEGETABLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.
SO I PRETENDED TO PARTICIPATE, BUT I NEVER INHALED THE SMOKE.
AND AS SOON AS MY FRIENDS' BACKS WERE TURNED, I STUCK MY FINGERS IN MY EYES TO MAKE THEM GOOD AND RED.
THEN, I IMITATED THEIR LAUGHTER.
I WAS QUITE BELIEVABLE.

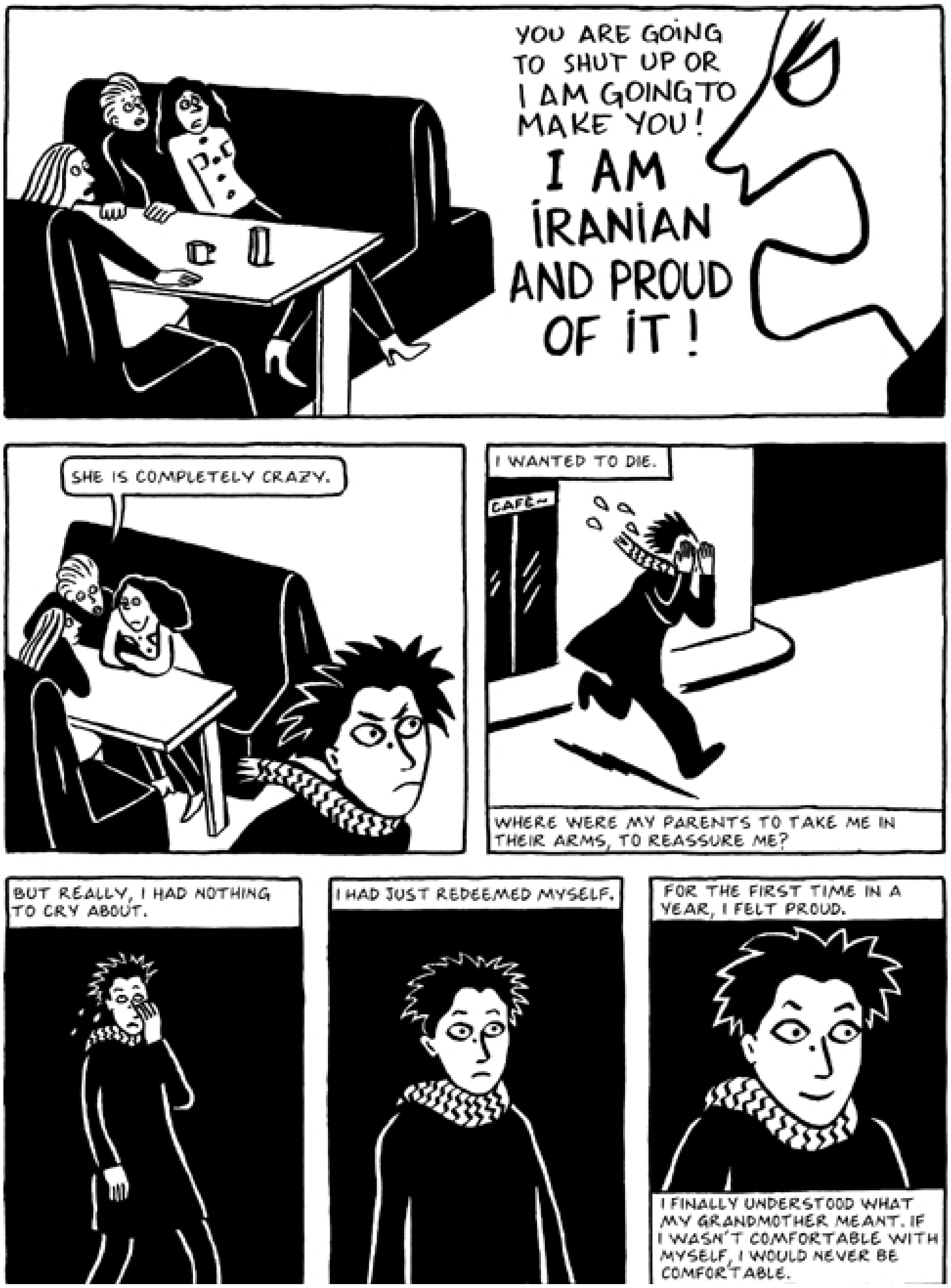

THE HARDER I TRIED TO ASSIMILATE, THE MORE I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WAS DISTANCING MYSELF FROM MY CULTURE, BETRAYING MY PARENTS AND MY ORIGINS, THAT I WAS PLAYING A GAME BY SOMEBODY ELSE'S RULES.


EACH TELEPHONE CALL FROM MY PARENTS REMINDED ME OF MY COWARDICE AND MY BETRAYAL. I WAS AT ONCE HAPPY TO HEAR THEIR VOICES AND ASHAMED TO TALK TO THEM.
- YES, I'M DOING FINE. I'M GETTING GOOD GRADES.
- YOU HAVE SOME GOOD FRIENDS?
- FRIENDS? OF COURSE, LOTS!
- THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME, YOU ALWAYS HAD A TALENT FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE!
- DAD . . .
- EAT ORANGES. THEY'RE FULL OF VITAMIN C.
- DAD, I LOVE YOU!
- US TOO, WE ADORE YOU. YOU'RE THE CHILD ALL PARENTS DREAM OF HAVING!
IF ONLY THEY KNEW . . . IF THEY KNEW THAT THEIR DAUGHTER WAS MADE UP LIKE A PUNK, THAT SHE SMOKED JOINTS TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION, THAT SHE HAD SEEN MEN IN THEIR UNDERWEAR WHILE THEY WERE BEING BOMBED EVERY DAY, THEY WOULDN'T CALL ME THEIR DREAM CHILD.

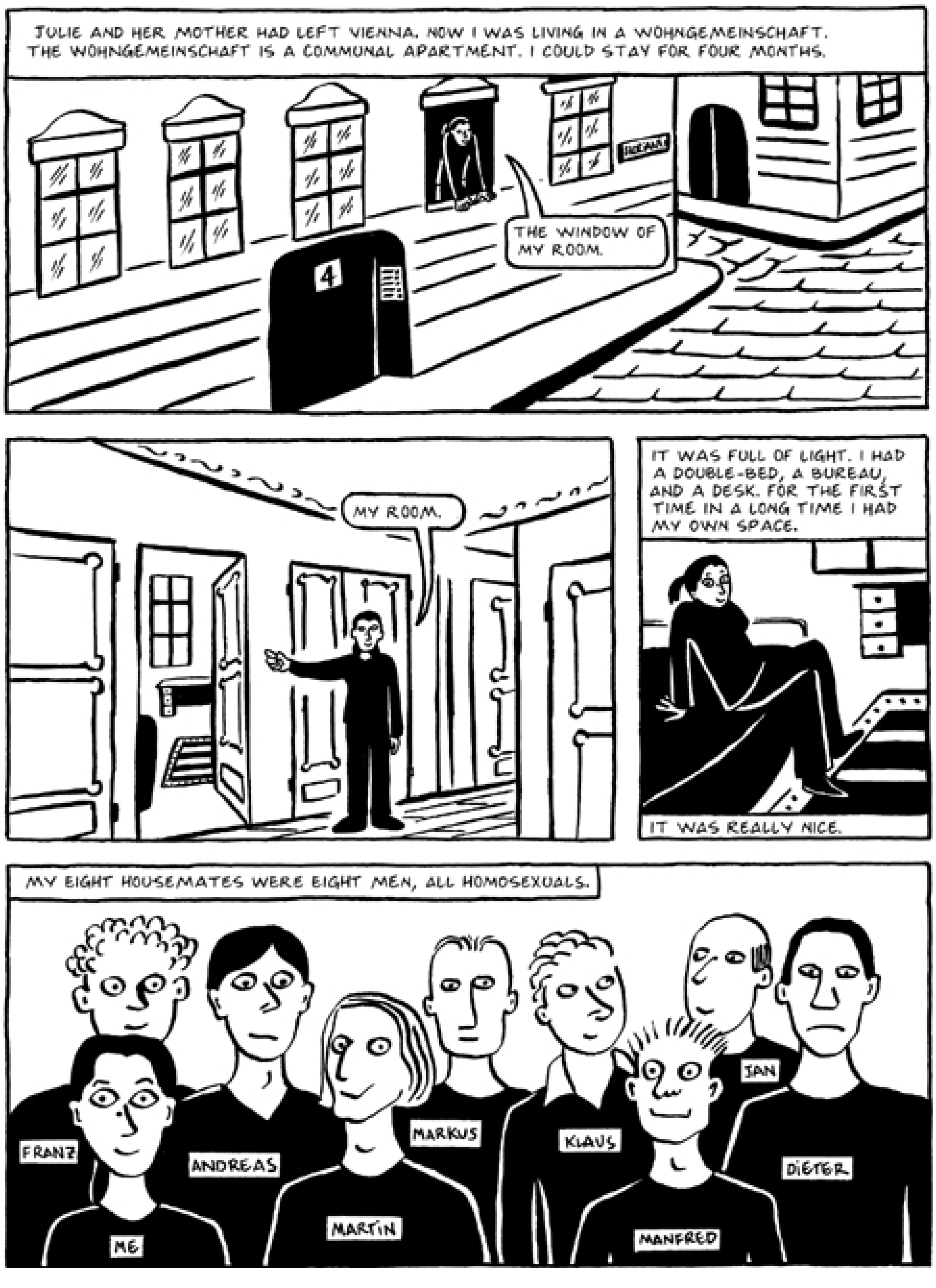

I FELT SO GUILTY THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS NEWS ABOUT IRAN, I CHANGED THE CHANNEL.
IRAN-IRAK KRIEG
IT WAS TOO UNBEARABLE.
DID YOU WATCH TV YESTERDAY? YOU MUST BE WORRIED.
NO, IT'S OKAY! I TALKED TO MY PARENTS. THEY'RE FINE.
I WAS LYING. I KNEW NOTHING AND I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW MORE.
I WANTED TO FORGET EVERYTHING, TO MAKE MY PAST DISAPPEAR, BUT MY UNCONSCIOUS CAUGHT UP WITH ME.

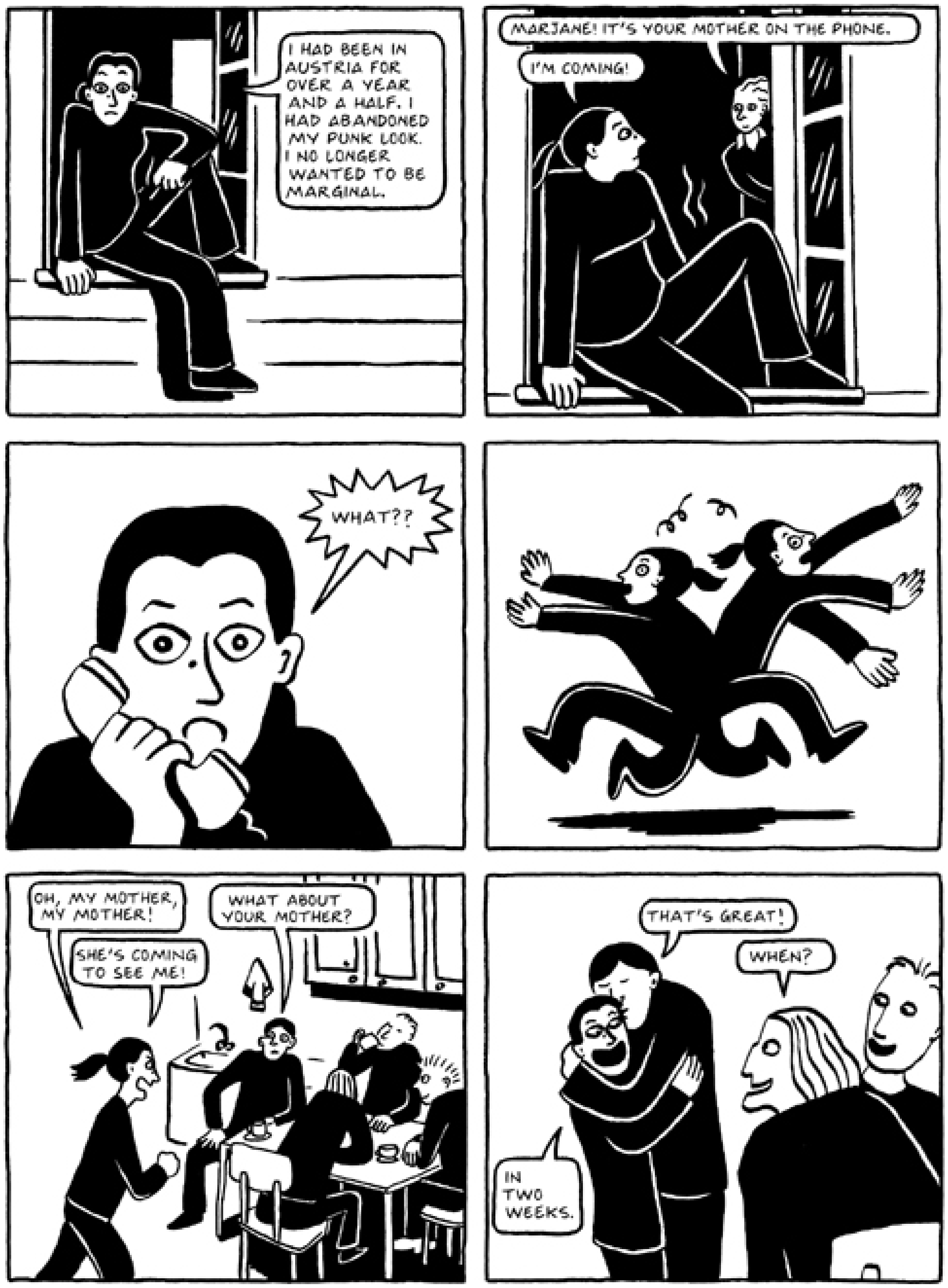

I EVEN MANAGED TO DENY MY NATIONALITY.
DURING A PARTY AT SCHOOL.
HI, I'M MARC. I GRADUATED LAST YEAR. YOU'RE NEW! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
MARJANE. I'VE BEEN HERE A YEAR.
AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM MARIE-JEANNE?
I'M FRENCH.
OH REALLY? YOU HAVE A FUNNY ACCENT FOR A FRENCH GIRL.
OH! I HAVE TO FIND MY FRIENDS. BYE.
I SHOULD SAY THAT AT THE TIME, IRAN WAS THE EPITOME OF EVIL AND TO BE IRANIAN WAS A HEAVY BURDEN TO BEAR.
IT WAS EASIER TO LIE THAN TO ASSUME THAT BURDEN.
WHO'S THAT GUY?
MARC? HE'S ANNA'S BROTHER, THE GIRL IN THE STRIPED SWEATER. HE'S A JERK FROM BOURGE. YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO THOSE PEOPLE.
AND WHEN I GOT BACK THAT NIGHT, I REMEMBERED THAT LINE MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME: "ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DIGNITY AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF!"
OH GRANDMA ...

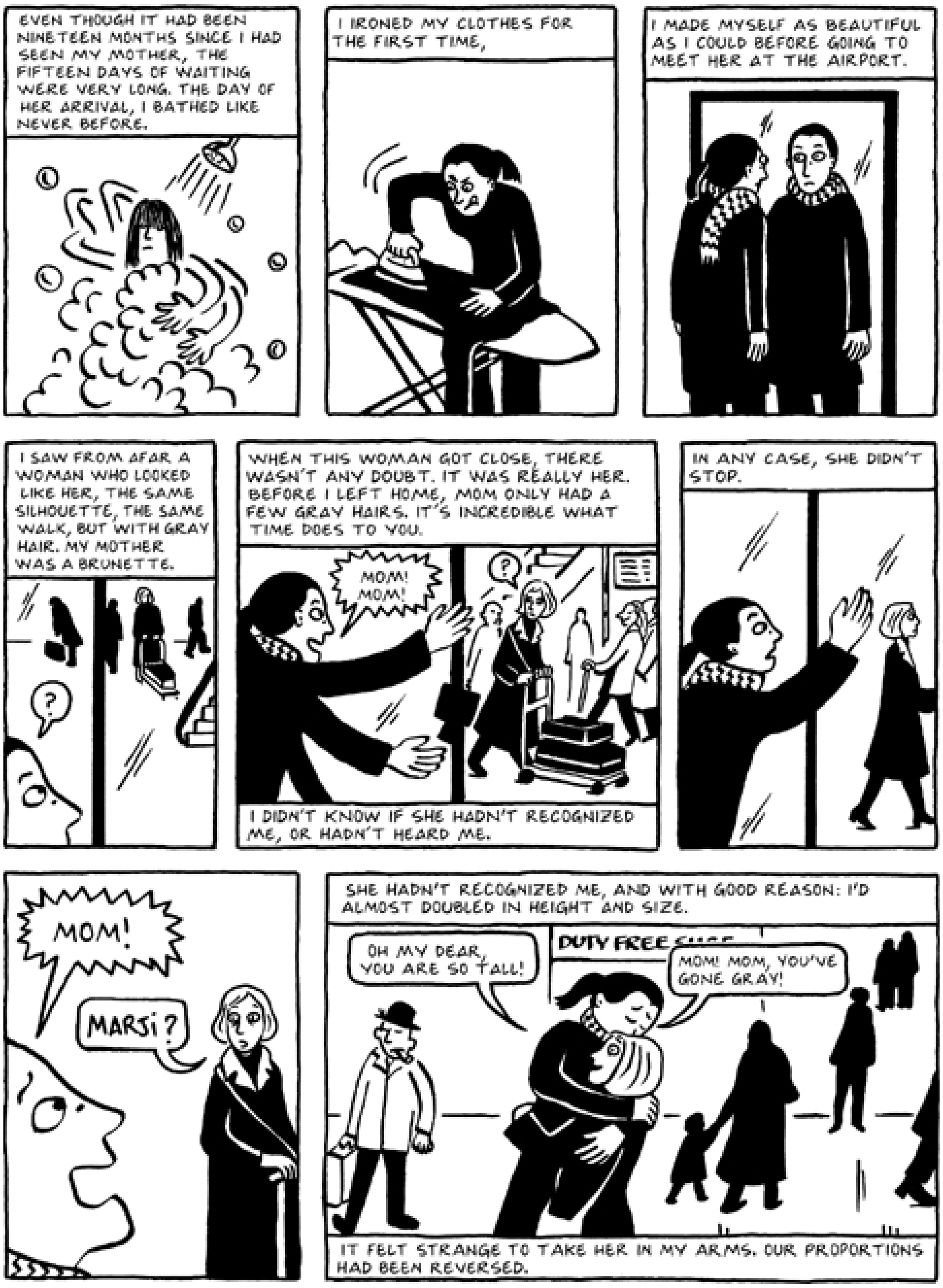

UNFORTUNATELY, IT ALL CAME OUT IN THE END. A FEW DAYS LATER IN A CAFÉ NEAR SCHOOL.
SHE TOLD MY BROTHER THAT SHE WAS FRENCH.
AND YOUR BROTHER BELIEVED HER?
WHAT DO YOU THINK? HAVE YOU HEARD THE WAY SHE TALKS?
HAVE YOU SEEN HER FACE?
BUT YOUR BROTHER WAS HITTING ON HER OR WHAT?
OF COURSE NOT!!
AH, THAT'S A RELIEF. CONSIDERING HOW UGLY SHE IS, IT WOULD BE REALLY UNFAIR IF SHE GOT A GUY LIKE MARC.
HA, HA, HA! I WOULD COMMIT SUICIDE IF MY BROTHER WAS GOING OUT WITH A COW LIKE THAT!
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE NOTICED, BUT SHE NEVER TALKS ABOUT EITHER HER COUNTRY OR HER PARENTS.
WELL, OF COURSE! SHE LIES WHEN SHE SAYS THAT SHE'S KNOWN WAR. IT'S ALL TO MAKE HERSELF SEEM INTERESTING.
ANYWAY, HER PARENTS CLEARLY DON'T CARE ABOUT HER, OR THEY WOULDN'T HAVE SENT HER ALONE.
THAT WAS TOO MUCH. I SAW RED.


YOU ARE GOING TO SHUT UP OR I AM GOING TO MAKE YOU! I AM IRANIAN AND PROUD OF IT!
SHE IS COMPLETELY CRAZY.
I WANTED TO DIE.
CAFÉ
WHERE WERE MY PARENTS TO TAKE ME IN THEIR ARMS, TO REASSURE ME?
BUT REALLY, I HAD NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT.
I HAD JUST REDEEMED MYSELF.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A YEAR, I FELT PROUD.
I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT MY GRANDMOTHER MEANT. IF I WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH MYSELF, I WOULD NEVER BE COMFORTABLE.

# THE HORSE


JULIE AND HER MOTHER HAD LEFT VIENNA. NOW I WAS LIVING IN A WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT. THE WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT IS A COMMUNAL APARTMENT. I COULD STAY FOR FOUR MONTHS.
4
THE WINDOW OF MY ROOM.
MY ROOM.
IT WAS FULL OF LIGHT. I HAD A DOUBLE-BED, A BUREAU, AND A DESK. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME I HAD MY OWN SPACE.
IT WAS REALLY NICE.
MY EIGHT HOUSEMATES WERE EIGHT MEN, ALL HOMOSEXUALS.
FRANZ
ANDREAS
MARKUS
KLAUS
JAN
DIETER
ME
MARTIN
MANFRED


I HAD BEEN IN AUSTRIA FOR OVER A YEAR AND A HALF. I HAD ABANDONED MY PUNK LOOK. I NO LONGER WANTED TO BE MARGINAL.
MARJANE! IT'S YOUR MOTHER ON THE PHONE.
I'M COMING!
WHAT??
OH, MY MOTHER, MY MOTHER!
SHE'S COMING TO SEE ME!
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?
THAT'S GREAT!
WHEN?
IN TWO WEEKS.



EVEN THOUGH IT HAD BEEN NINETEEN MONTHS SINCE I HAD SEEN MY MOTHER, THE FIFTEEN DAYS OF WAITING WERE VERY LONG. THE DAY OF HER ARRIVAL, I BATHED LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

I IRONED MY CLOTHES FOR THE FIRST TIME,

I MADE MYSELF AS BEAUTIFUL AS I COULD BEFORE GOING TO MEET HER AT THE AIRPORT.

I SAW FROM AFAR A WOMAN WHO LOOKED LIKE HER, THE SAME SILHOUETTE, THE SAME WALK, BUT WITH GRAY HAIR. MY MOTHER WAS A BRUNETTE.

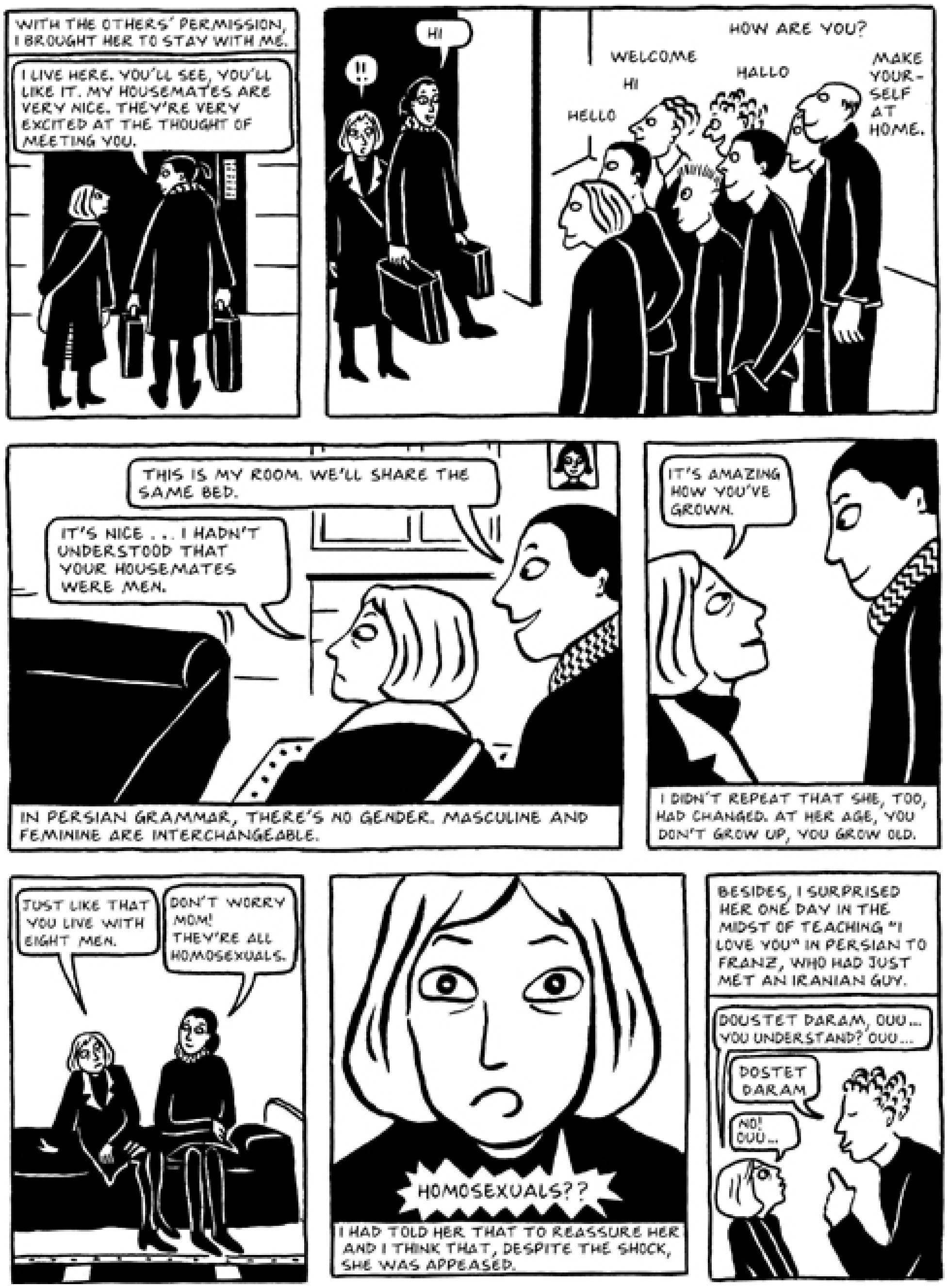
WHEN THIS WOMAN GOT CLOSE, THERE WASN'T ANY DOUBT. IT WAS REALLY HER. BEFORE I LEFT HOME, MOM ONLY HAD A FEW GRAY HAIRS. IT'S INCREDIBLE WHAT TIME DOES TO YOU.

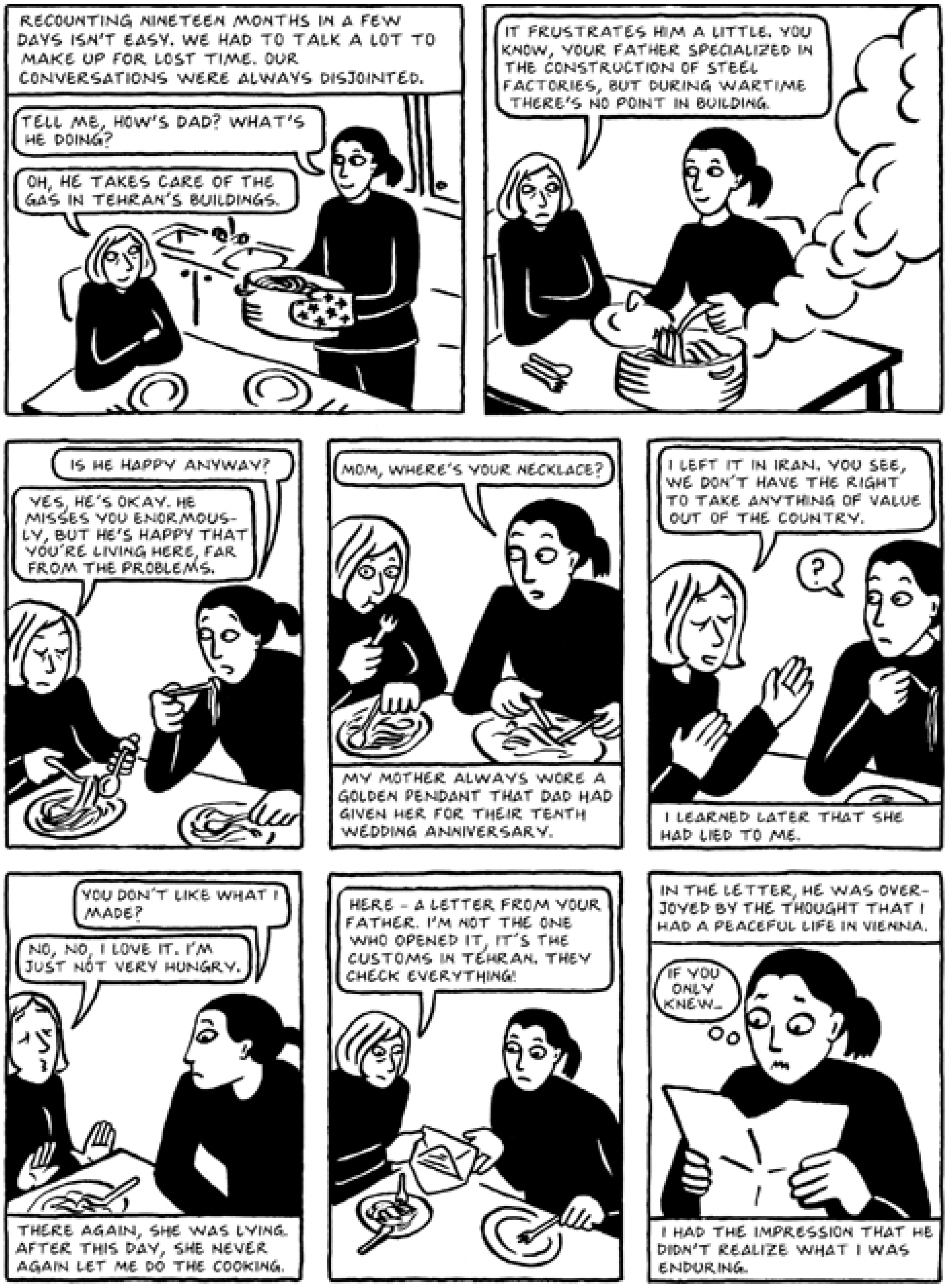
I DIDN'T KNOW IF SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, OR HADN'T HEARD ME.

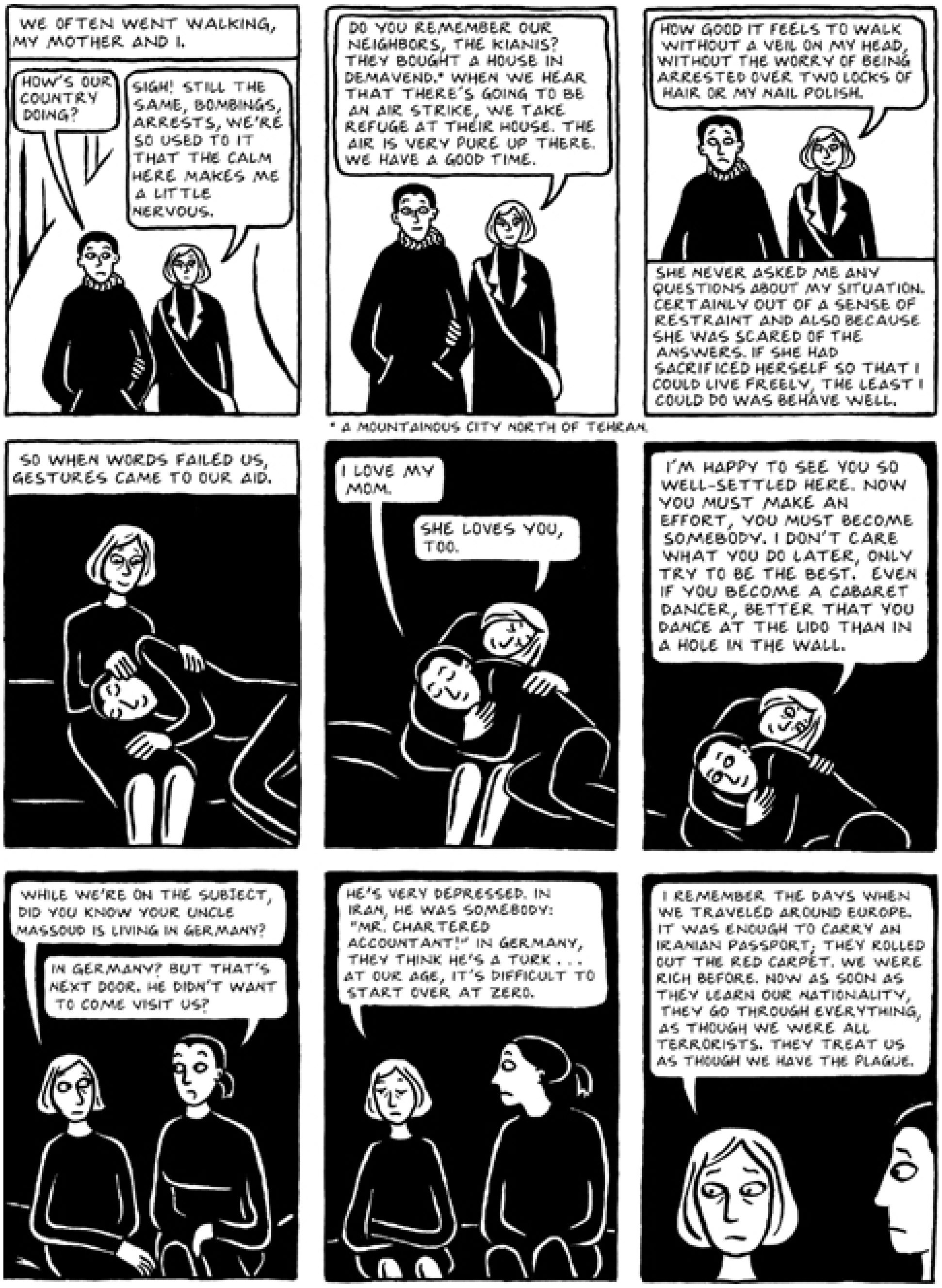
IN ANY CASE, SHE DIDN'T STOP.

SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, AND WITH GOOD REASON: I'D ALMOST DOUBLED IN HEIGHT AND SIZE.

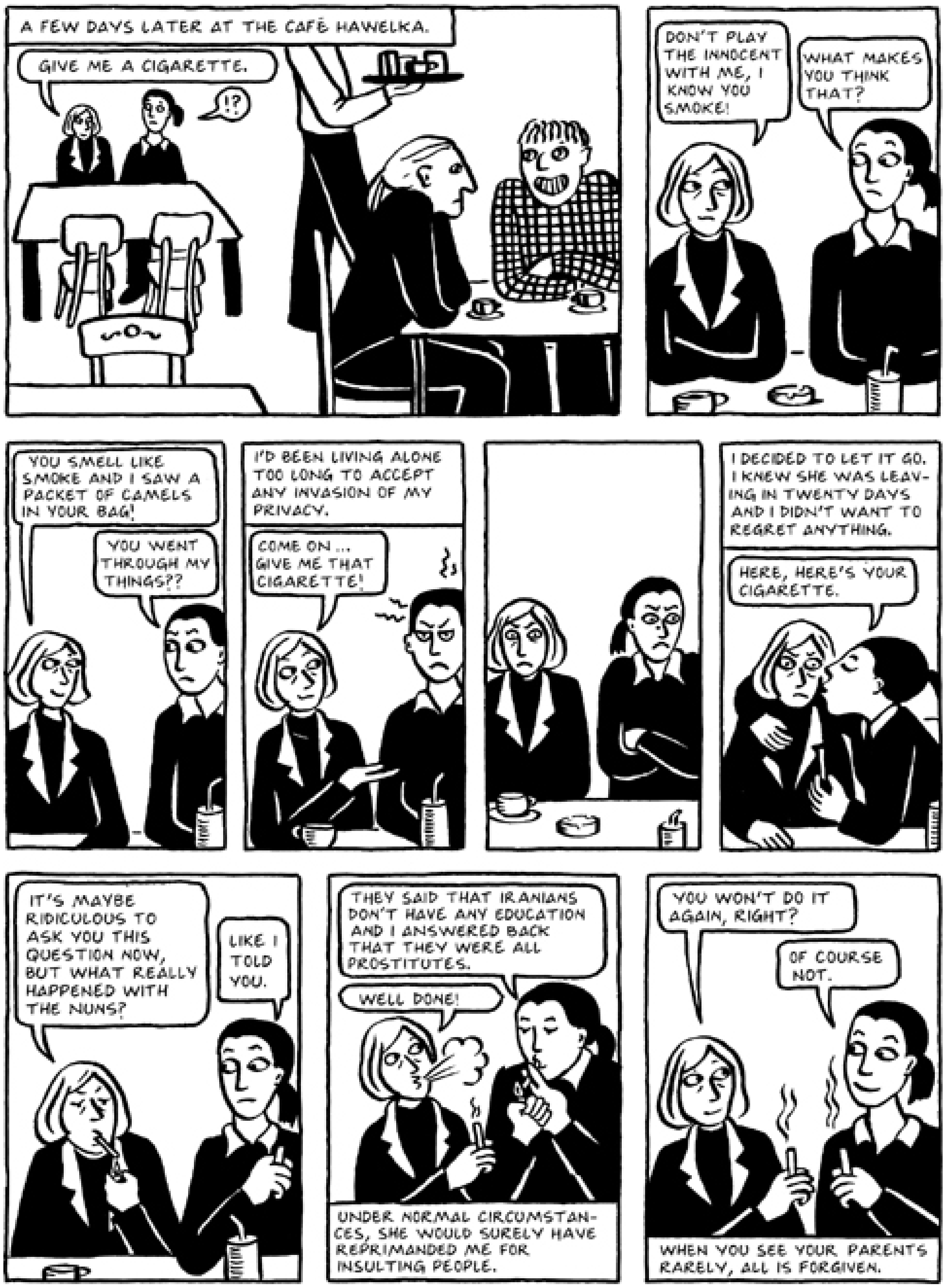
IT FELT STRANGE TO TAKE HER IN MY ARMS. OUR PROPORTIONS HAD BEEN REVERSED.

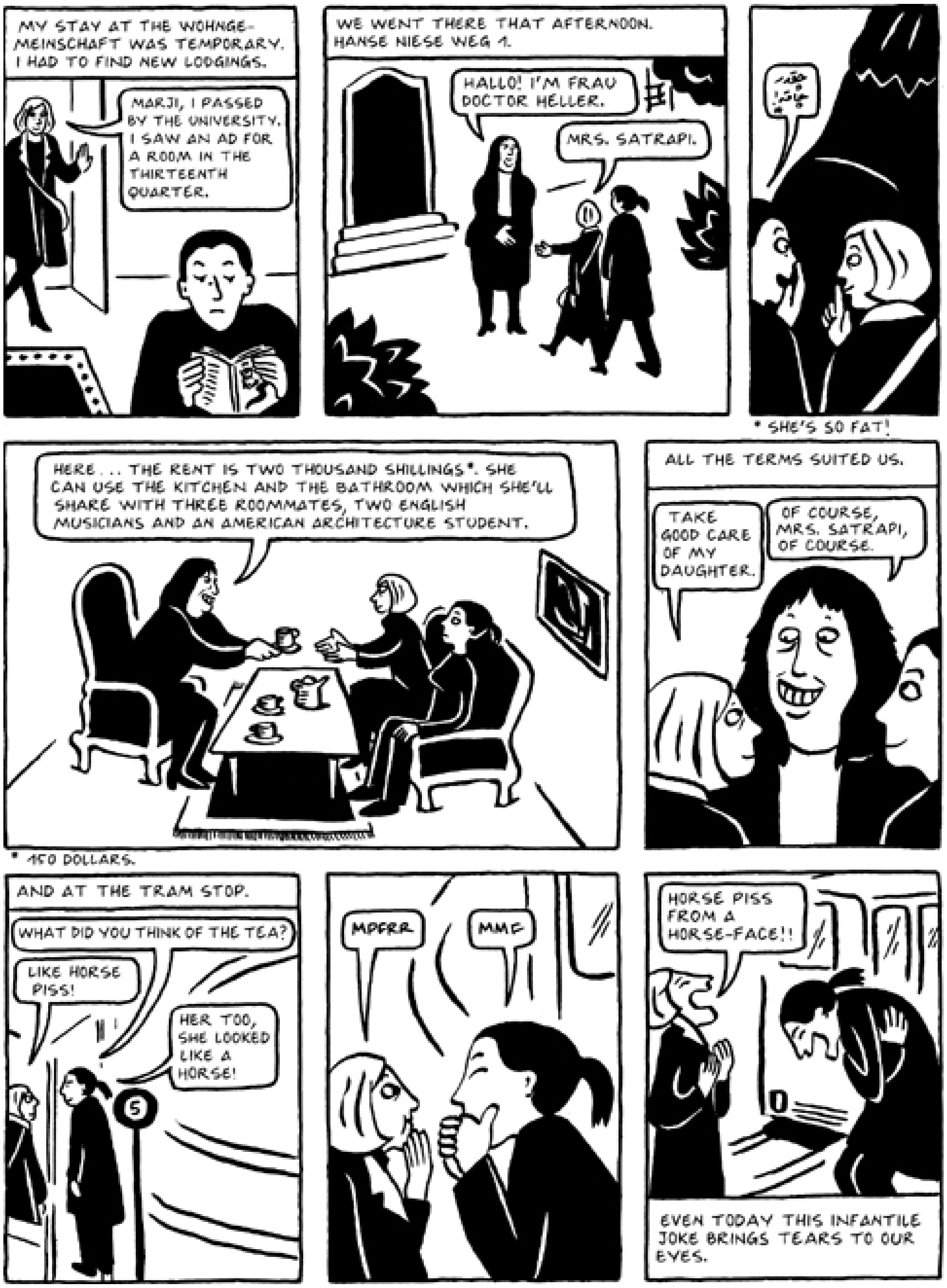

WITH THE OTHERS' PERMISSION, I BROUGHT HER TO STAY WITH ME.
I LIVE HERE. YOU'LL SEE, YOU'LL LIKE IT. MY HOUSEMATES ARE VERY NICE. THEY'RE VERY EXCITED AT THE THOUGHT OF MEETING YOU.
!!
HI
HOW ARE YOU?
WELCOME
HI
HALLO
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
HELLO
THIS IS MY ROOM. WE'LL SHARE THE SAME BED.
IT'S NICE . . . I HADN'T UNDERSTOOD THAT YOUR HOUSEMATES WERE MEN.
IN PERSIAN GRAMMAR, THERE'S NO GENDER. MASCULINE AND FEMININE ARE INTERCHANGEABLE.
IT'S AMAZING HOW YOU'VE GROWN.
I DIDN'T REPEAT THAT SHE, TOO, HAD CHANGED. AT HER AGE, YOU DON'T GROW UP, YOU GROW OLD.
JUST LIKE THAT YOU LIVE WITH EIGHT MEN.
DON'T WORRY MOM! THEY'RE ALL HOMOSEXUALS.
HOMOSEXUALS??
I HAD TOLD HER THAT TO REASSURE HER AND I THINK THAT, DESPITE THE SHOCK, SHE WAS APPEASED.
BESIDES, I SURPRISED HER ONE DAY IN THE MIDST OF TEACHING "I LOVE YOU" IN PERSIAN TO FRANZ, WHO HAD JUST MET AN IRANIAN GUY.
DOUSTET DARAM, OUU... YOU UNDERSTAND? OUU...
DOSTET DARAM
NO! OUU...


RECOUNTING NINETEEN MONTHS IN A FEW DAYS ISN'T EASY. WE HAD TO TALK A LOT TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME. OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE ALWAYS DISJOINTED.
TELL ME, HOW'S DAD? WHAT'S HE DOING?
OH, HE TAKES CARE OF THE GAS IN TEHRAN'S BUILDINGS.
IT FRUSTRATES HIM A LITTLE. YOU KNOW, YOUR FATHER SPECIALIZED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF STEEL FACTORIES, BUT DURING WARTIME THERE'S NO POINT IN BUILDING.
IS HE HAPPY ANYWAY?
YES, HE'S OKAY. HE MISSES YOU ENORMOUSLY, BUT HE'S HAPPY THAT YOU'RE LIVING HERE, FAR FROM THE PROBLEMS.
MOM, WHERE'S YOUR NECKLACE?
MY MOTHER ALWAYS WORE A GOLDEN PENDANT THAT DAD HAD GIVEN HER FOR THEIR TENTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.
I LEFT IT IN IRAN. YOU SEE, WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE ANYTHING OF VALUE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.
?
I LEARNED LATER THAT SHE HAD LIED TO ME.
YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I MADE?
NO, NO, I LOVE IT. I'M JUST NOT VERY HUNGRY.
THERE AGAIN, SHE WAS LYING. AFTER THIS DAY, SHE NEVER AGAIN LET ME DO THE COOKING.
HERE - A LETTER FROM YOUR FATHER. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO OPENED IT, IT'S THE CUSTOMS IN TEHRAN. THEY CHECK EVERYTHING!
IN THE LETTER, HE WAS OVERJOYED BY THE THOUGHT THAT I HAD A PEACEFUL LIFE IN VIENNA.
IF YOU ONLY KNEW...
I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS ENDURING.


WE OFTEN WENT WALKING, MY MOTHER AND I.
HOW'S OUR COUNTRY DOING?
SIGH! STILL THE SAME, BOMBINGS, ARRESTS, WE'RE SO USED TO IT THAT THE CALM HERE MAKES ME A LITTLE NERVOUS.
DO YOU REMEMBER OUR NEIGHBORS, THE KIANIS? THEY BOUGHT A HOUSE IN DEMAVEND.* WHEN WE HEAR THAT THERE'S GOING TO BE AN AIR STRIKE, WE TAKE REFUGE AT THEIR HOUSE. THE AIR IS VERY PURE UP THERE. WE HAVE A GOOD TIME.
HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO WALK WITHOUT A VEIL ON MY HEAD, WITHOUT THE WORRY OF BEING ARRESTED OVER TWO LOCKS OF HAIR OR MY NAIL POLISH.
SHE NEVER ASKED ME ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY SITUATION. CERTAINLY OUT OF A SENSE OF RESTRAINT AND ALSO BECAUSE SHE WAS SCARED OF THE ANSWERS. IF SHE HAD SACRIFICED HERSELF SO THAT I COULD LIVE FREELY, THE LEAST I COULD DO WAS BEHAVE WELL.
SO WHEN WORDS FAILED US, GESTURES CAME TO OUR AID.
I LOVE MY MOM.
SHE LOVES YOU, TOO.
I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU SO WELL-SETTLED HERE. NOW YOU MUST MAKE AN EFFORT, YOU MUST BECOME SOMEBODY. I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO LATER, ONLY TRY TO BE THE BEST. EVEN IF YOU BECOME A CABARET DANCER, BETTER THAT YOU DANCE AT THE LIDO THAN IN A HOLE IN THE WALL.
WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, DID YOU KNOW YOUR UNCLE MASSOUD IS LIVING IN GERMANY?
IN GERMANY? BUT THAT'S NEXT DOOR. HE DIDN'T WANT TO COME VISIT US?
HE'S VERY DEPRESSED. IN IRAN, HE WAS SOMEBODY: "MR. CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT!" IN GERMANY, THEY THINK HE'S A TURK . . . AT OUR AGE, IT'S DIFFICULT TO START OVER AT ZERO.
I REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN WE TRAVELED AROUND EUROPE. IT WAS ENOUGH TO CARRY AN IRANIAN PASSPORT, THEY ROLLED OUT THE RED CARPET. WE WERE RICH BEFORE. NOW AS SOON AS THEY LEARN OUR NATIONALITY, THEY GO THROUGH EVERYTHING, AS THOUGH WE WERE ALL TERRORISTS. THEY TREAT US AS THOUGH WE HAVE THE PLAGUE.

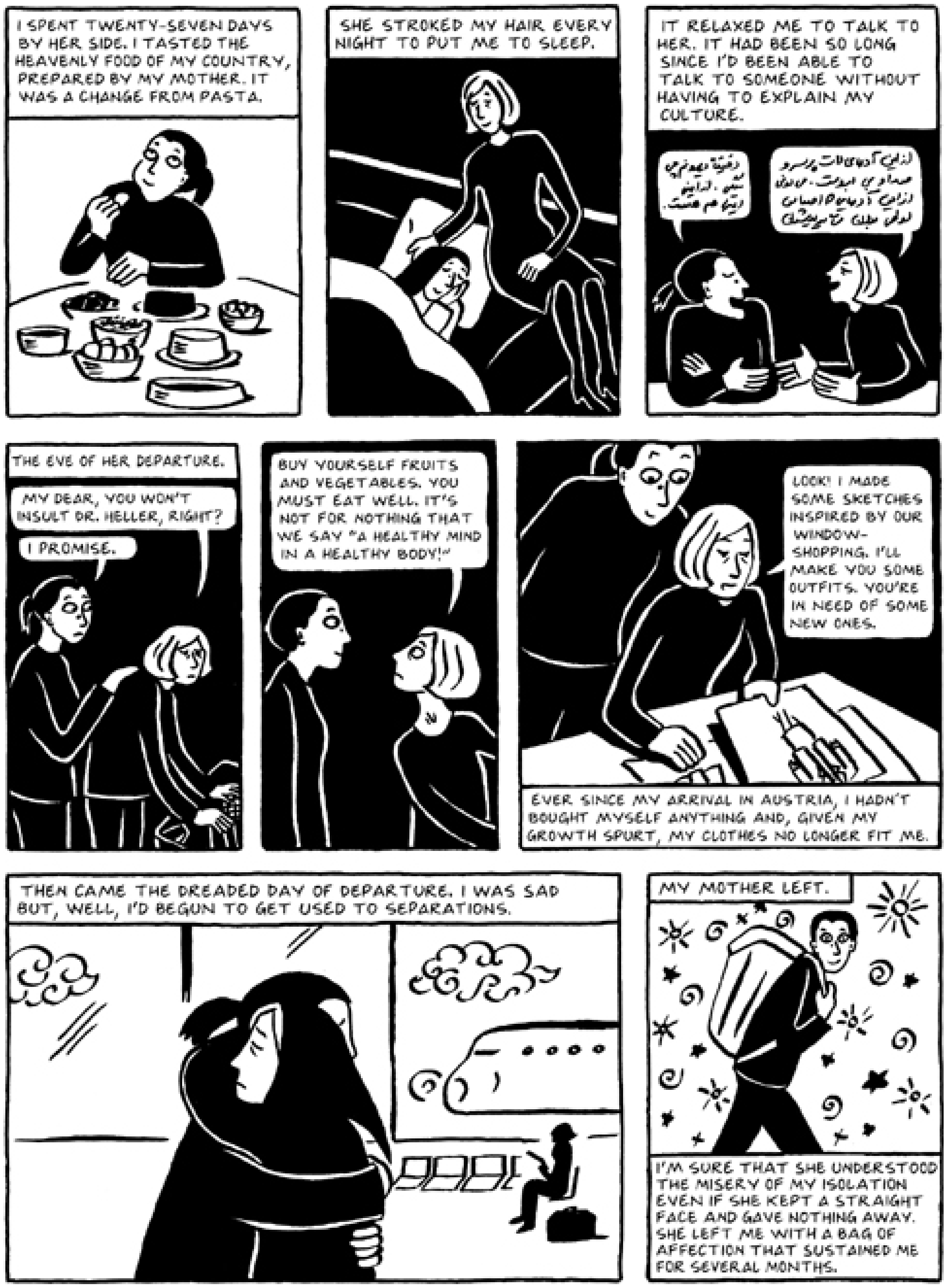
* A MOUNTAINOUS CITY NORTH OF TEHRAN.


A FEW DAYS LATER AT THE CAFÉ HAWELKA.
GIVE ME A CIGARETTE.
!?
DON'T PLAY THE INNOCENT WITH ME, I KNOW YOU SMOKE!
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?
YOU SMELL LIKE SMOKE AND I SAW A PACKET OF CAMELS IN YOUR BAG!
YOU WENT THROUGH MY THINGS??
I'D BEEN LIVING ALONE TOO LONG TO ACCEPT ANY INVASION OF MY PRIVACY.
COME ON ... GIVE ME THAT CIGARETTE!
I DECIDED TO LET IT GO. I KNEW SHE WAS LEAVING IN TWENTY DAYS AND I DIDN'T WANT TO REGRET ANYTHING.
HERE, HERE'S YOUR CIGARETTE.
IT'S MAYBE RIDICULOUS TO ASK YOU THIS QUESTION NOW, BUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WITH THE NUNS?
LIKE I TOLD YOU.
THEY SAID THAT IRANIANS DON'T HAVE ANY EDUCATION AND I ANSWERED BACK THAT THEY WERE ALL PROSTITUTES.
WELL DONE!
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, SHE WOULD SURELY HAVE REPRIMANDED ME FOR INSULTING PEOPLE.
YOU WON'T DO IT AGAIN, RIGHT?
OF COURSE NOT.
WHEN YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS RARELY, ALL IS FORGIVEN.

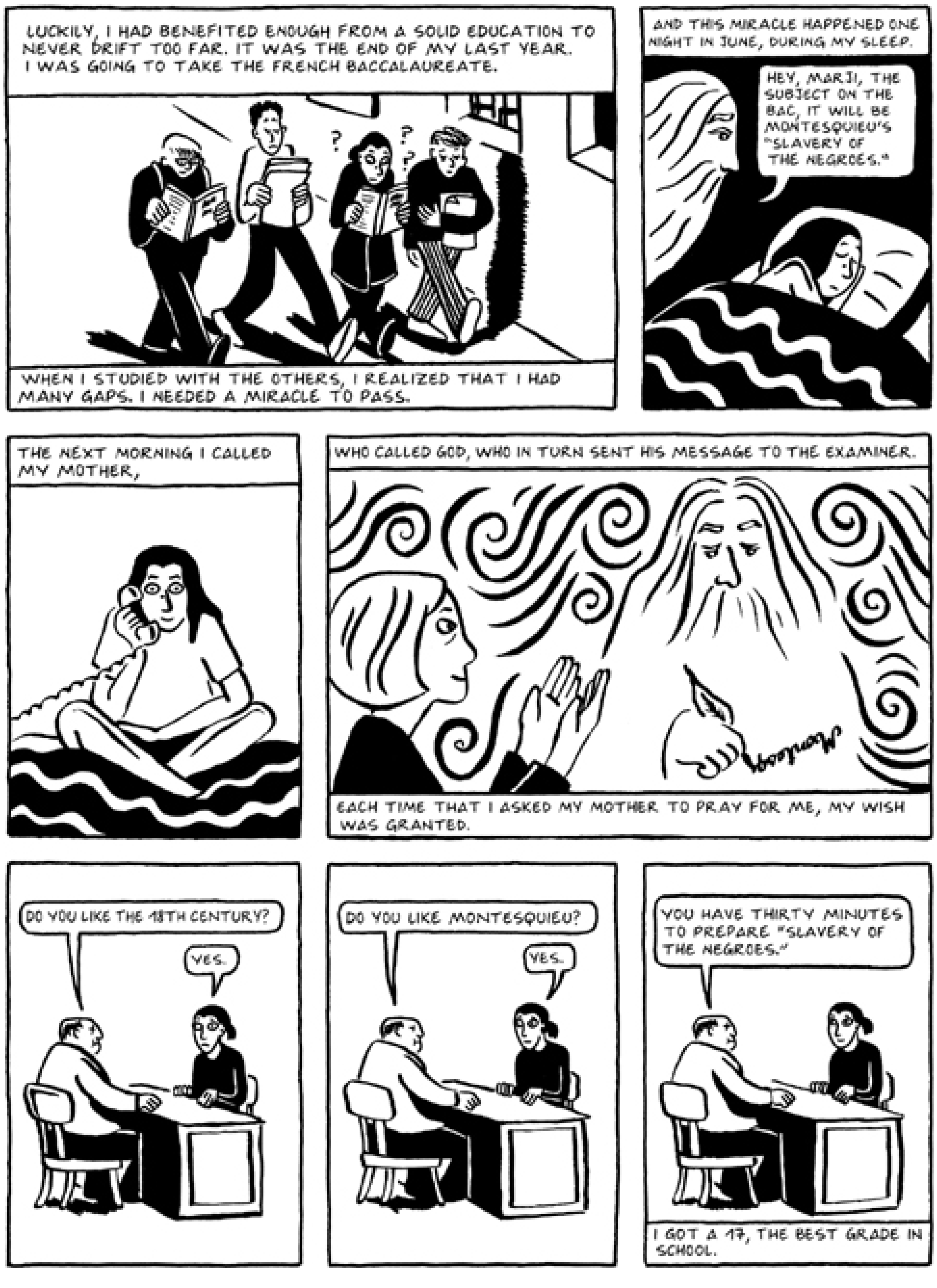

MY STAY AT THE WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT WAS TEMPORARY. I HAD TO FIND NEW LODGINGS.
MARJI, I PASSED BY THE UNIVERSITY. I SAW AN AD FOR A ROOM IN THE THIRTEENTH QUARTER.
WE WENT THERE THAT AFTERNOON. HANSE NIESE WEG 1.
HALLO! I'M FRAU DOCTOR HELLER.
MRS. SATRAPI.
چقدر چاقه!*
HERE... THE RENT IS TWO THOUSAND SHILLINGS*. SHE CAN USE THE KITCHEN AND THE BATHROOM WHICH SHE'LL SHARE WITH THREE ROOMMATES, TWO ENGLISH MUSICIANS AND AN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE STUDENT.
ALL THE TERMS SUITED US.
TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY DAUGHTER.
OF COURSE, MRS. SATRAPI, OF COURSE.
AND AT THE TRAM STOP.
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE TEA?
LIKE HORSE PISS!
HER TOO, SHE LOOKED LIKE A HORSE!
5
MPFRR
MMF
HORSE PISS FROM A HORSE-FACE!!
EVEN TODAY THIS INFANTILE JOKE BRINGS TEARS TO OUR EYES.

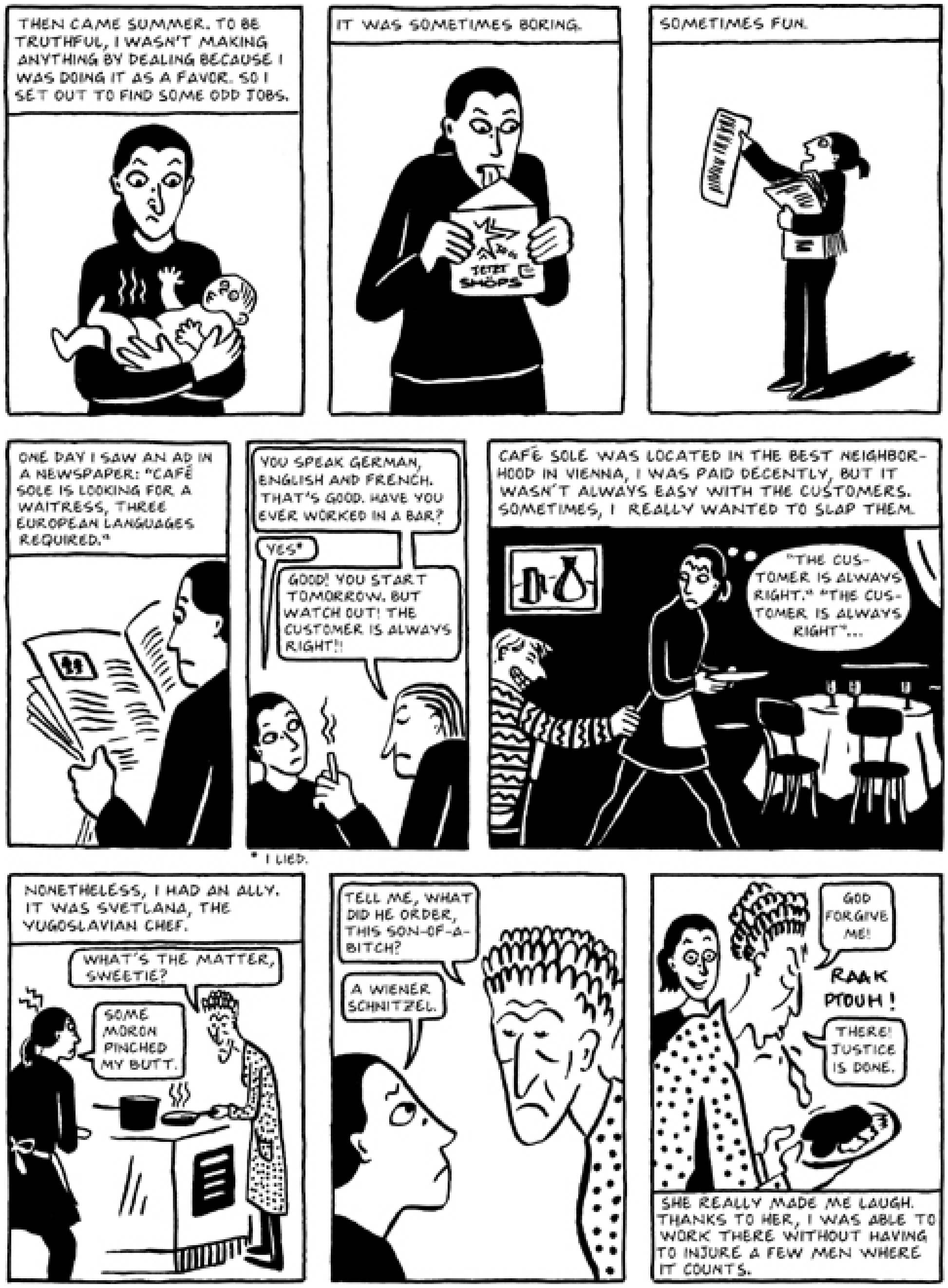
* SHE'S SO FAT!

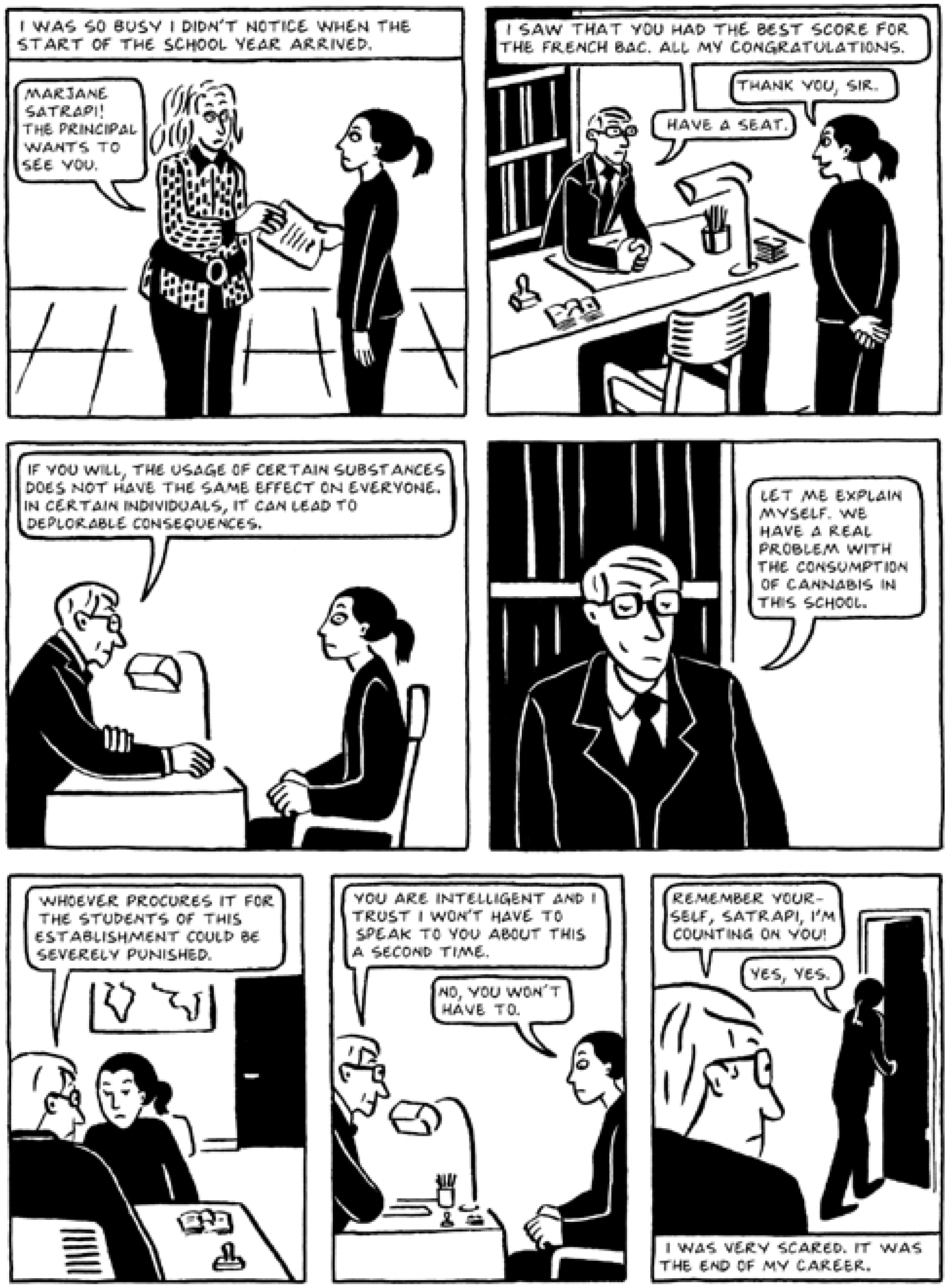
* 150 DOLLARS.

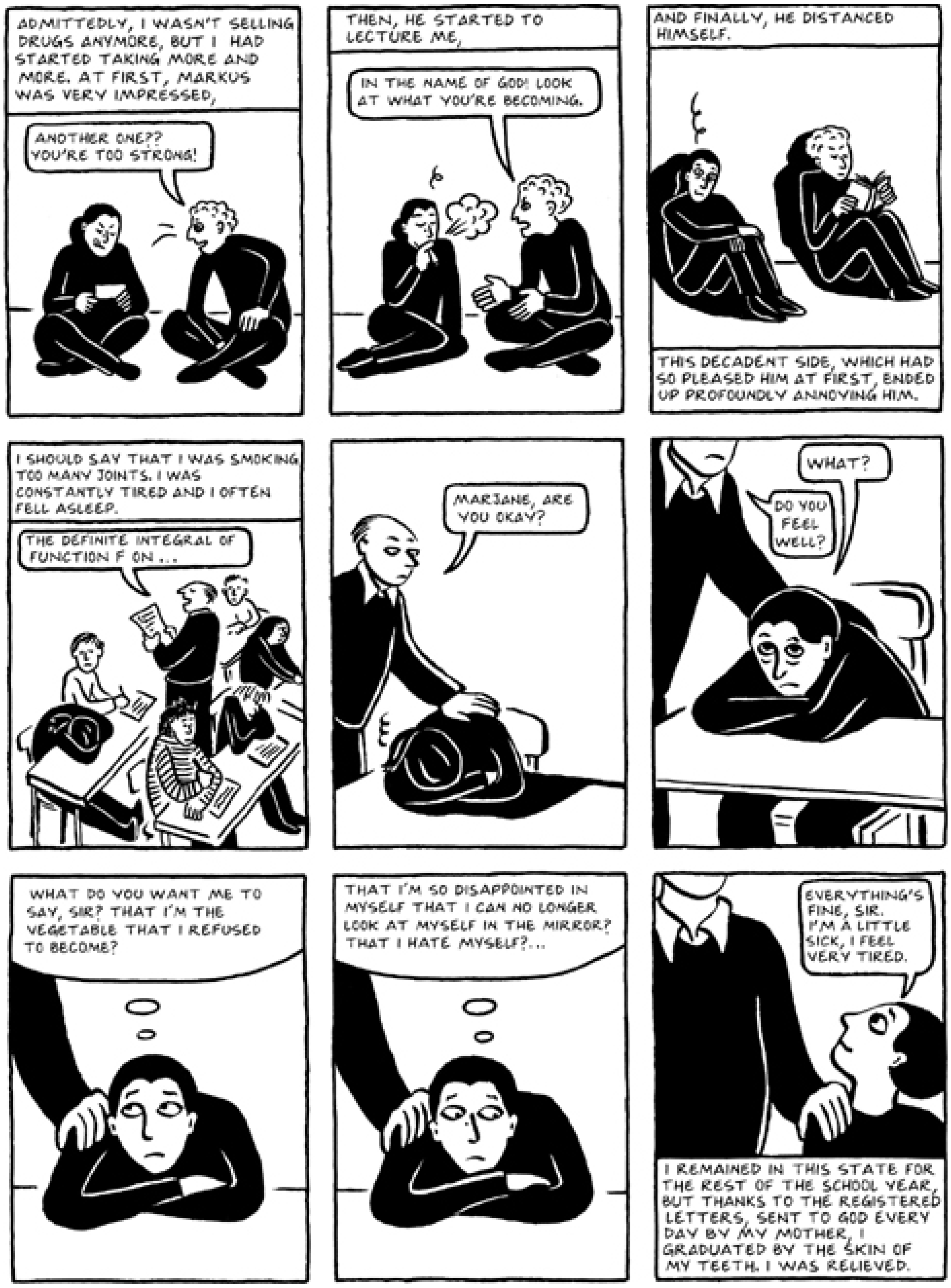

I SPENT TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS BY HER SIDE. I TASTED THE HEAVENLY FOOD OF MY COUNTRY, PREPARED BY MY MOTHER. IT WAS A CHANGE FROM PASTA.
SHE STROKED MY HAIR EVERY NIGHT TO PUT ME TO SLEEP.
IT RELAXED ME TO TALK TO HER. IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'D BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE WITHOUT HAVING TO EXPLAIN MY CULTURE.
THE EVE OF HER DEPARTURE.
MY DEAR, YOU WON'T INSULT DR. HELLER, RIGHT?
I PROMISE.
BUY YOURSELF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. YOU MUST EAT WELL. IT'S NOT FOR NOTHING THAT WE SAY "A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY!"
LOOK! I MADE SOME SKETCHES INSPIRED BY OUR WINDOW-SHOPPING. I'LL MAKE YOU SOME OUTFITS. YOU'RE IN NEED OF SOME NEW ONES.
EVER SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUSTRIA, I HADN'T BOUGHT MYSELF ANYTHING AND, GIVEN MY GROWTH SPURT, MY CLOTHES NO LONGER FIT ME.
THEN CAME THE DREADED DAY OF DEPARTURE. I WAS SAD BUT, WELL, I'D BEGUN TO GET USED TO SEPARATIONS.
MY MOTHER LEFT.
I'M SURE THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THE MISERY OF MY ISOLATION EVEN IF SHE KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE AND GAVE NOTHING AWAY. SHE LEFT ME WITH A BAG OF AFFECTION THAT SUSTAINED ME FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

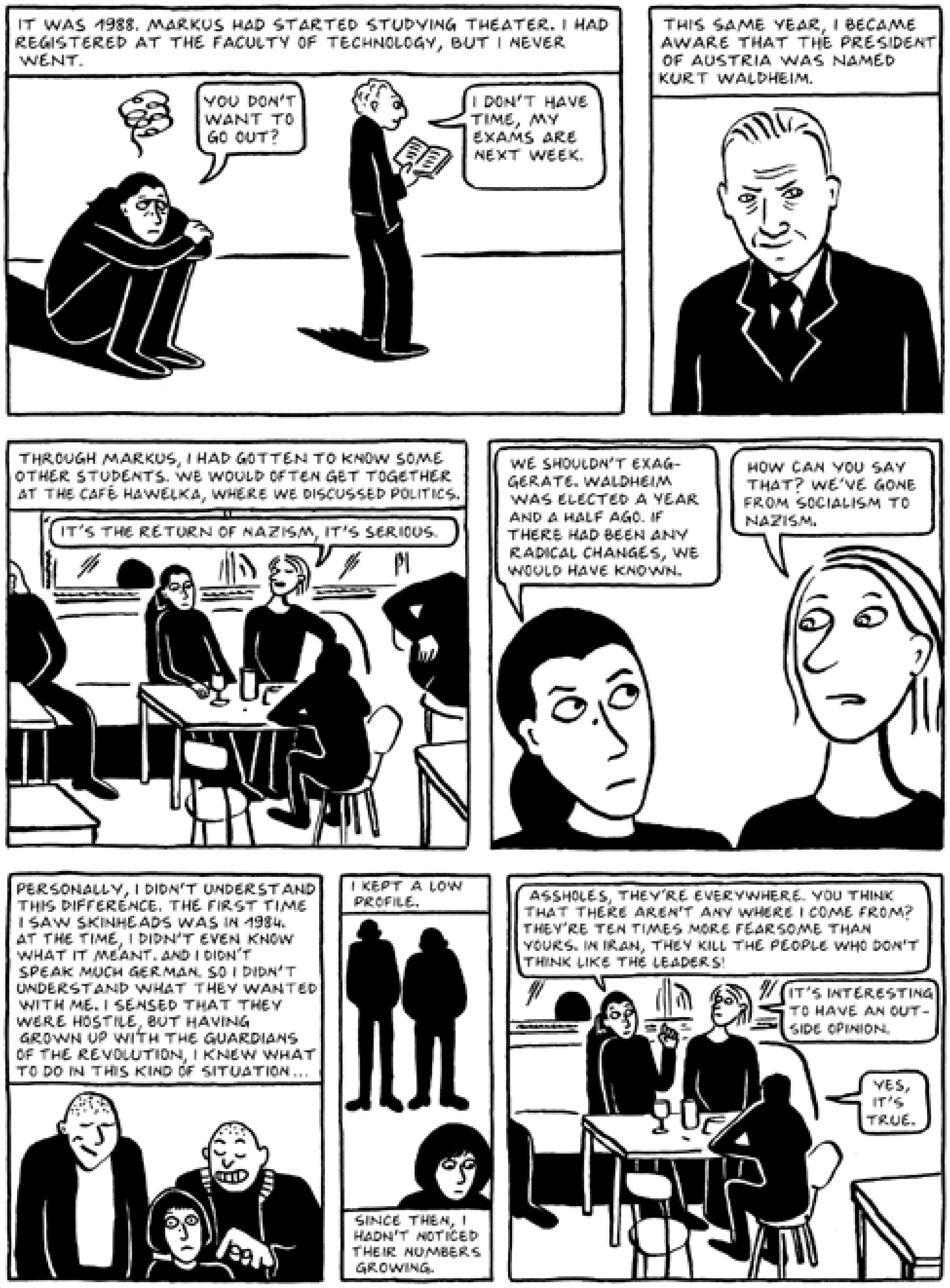
# THE CROISSANT

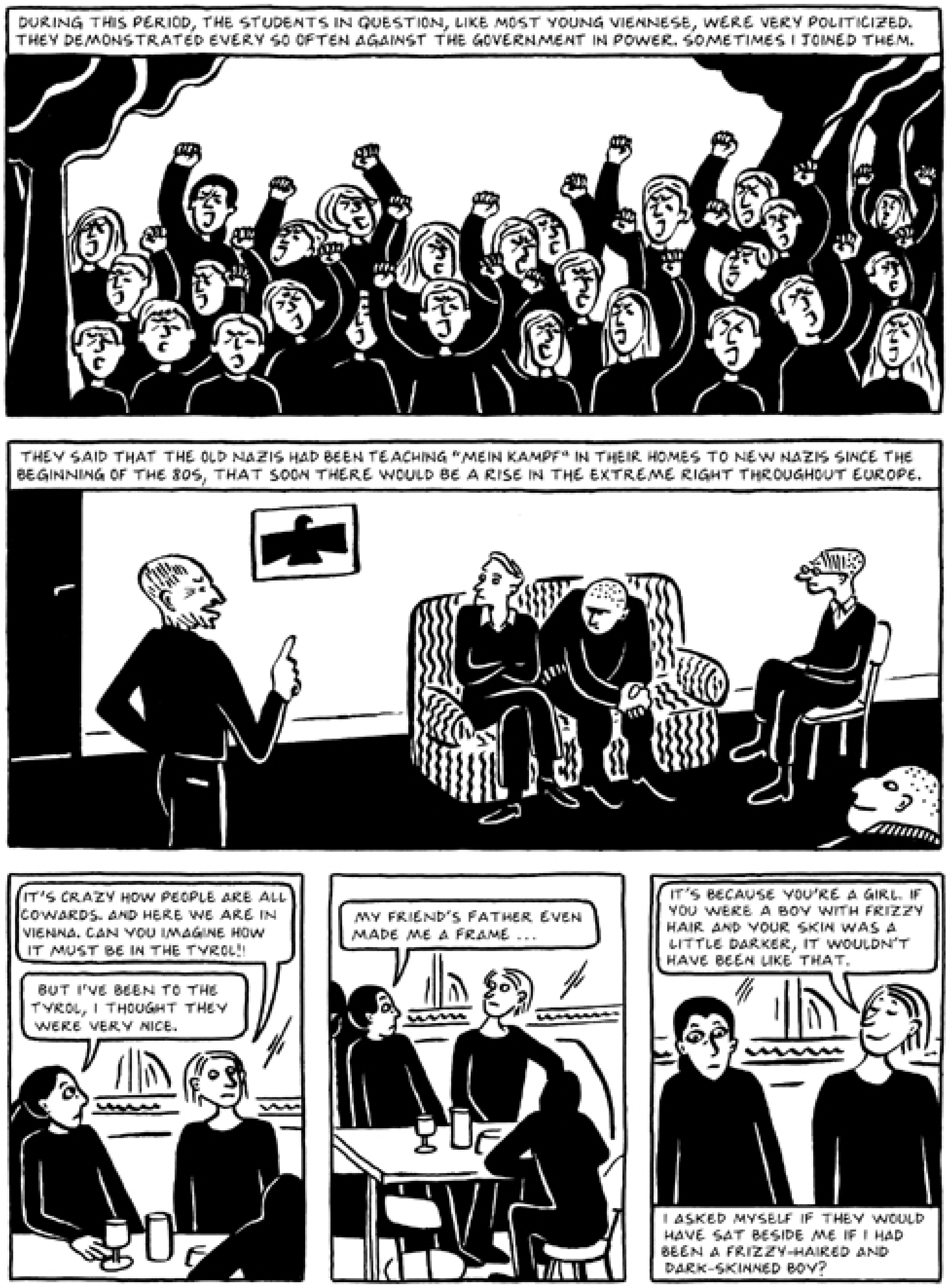

LUCKILY, I HAD BENEFITED ENOUGH FROM A SOLID EDUCATION TO NEVER DRIFT TOO FAR. IT WAS THE END OF MY LAST YEAR. I WAS GOING TO TAKE THE FRENCH BACCALAUREATE.
?
? ?
?
WHEN I STUDIED WITH THE OTHERS, I REALIZED THAT I HAD MANY GAPS. I NEEDED A MIRACLE TO PASS.
AND THIS MIRACLE HAPPENED ONE NIGHT IN JUNE, DURING MY SLEEP.
HEY, MARJI, THE SUBJECT ON THE BAC, IT WILL BE MONTESQUIEU'S "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."
THE NEXT MORNING I CALLED MY MOTHER,
WHO CALLED GOD, WHO IN TURN SENT HIS MESSAGE TO THE EXAMINER.
EACH TIME THAT I ASKED MY MOTHER TO PRAY FOR ME, MY WISH WAS GRANTED.
DO YOU LIKE THE 18TH CENTURY?
YES.
DO YOU LIKE MONTESQUIEU?
YES.
YOU HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO PREPARE "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."
I GOT A 17, THE BEST GRADE IN SCHOOL.

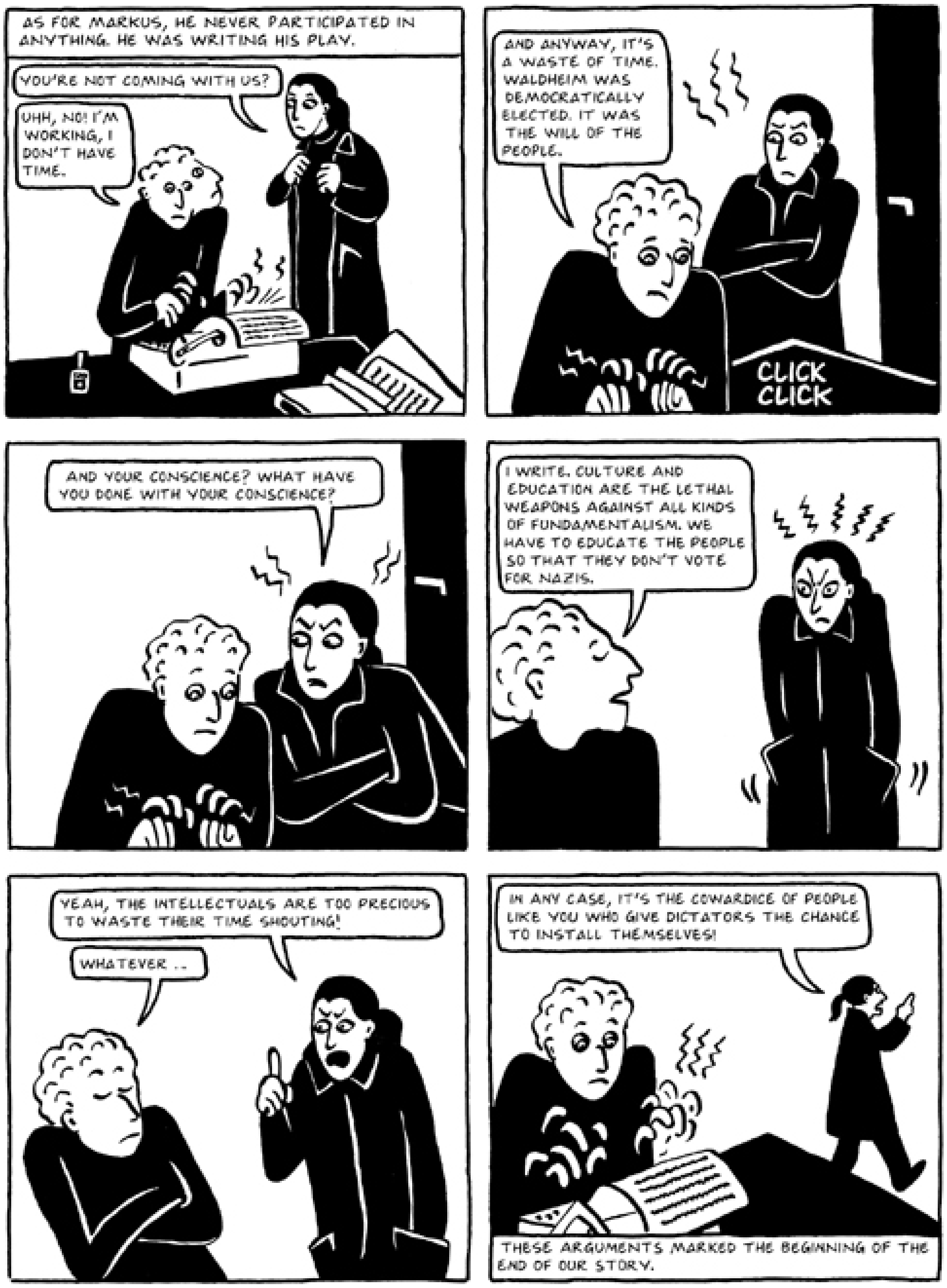

THEN CAME SUMMER. TO BE TRUTHFUL, I WASN'T MAKING ANYTHING BY DEALING BECAUSE I WAS DOING IT AS A FAVOR. SO I SET OUT TO FIND SOME ODD JOBS.
IT WAS SOMETIMES BORING.
JETZT
SHÖPS
SOMETIMES FUN.
ONE DAY I SAW AN AD IN A NEWSPAPER: "CAFÉ SOLE IS LOOKING FOR A WAITRESS, THREE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES REQUIRED."
YOU SPEAK GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THAT'S GOOD. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN A BAR?
YES*
GOOD! YOU START TOMORROW. BUT WATCH OUT! THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT!!
* I LIED.
CAFÉ SOLE WAS LOCATED IN THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD IN VIENNA, I WAS PAID DECENTLY, BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY WITH THE CUSTOMERS. SOMETIMES, I REALLY WANTED TO SLAP THEM.
"THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT." "THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT"...
NONETHELESS, I HAD AN ALLY. IT WAS SVETLANA, THE YUGOSLAVIAN CHEF.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SWEETIE?
SOME MORON PINCHED MY BUTT.
TELL ME, WHAT DID HE ORDER, THIS SON-OF-A-BITCH?
A WIENER SCHNITZEL.
GOD FORGIVE ME!
RAAK PTOUH!
THERE! JUSTICE IS DONE.
SHE REALLY MADE ME LAUGH. THANKS TO HER, I WAS ABLE TO WORK THERE WITHOUT HAVING TO INJURE A FEW MEN WHERE IT COUNTS.

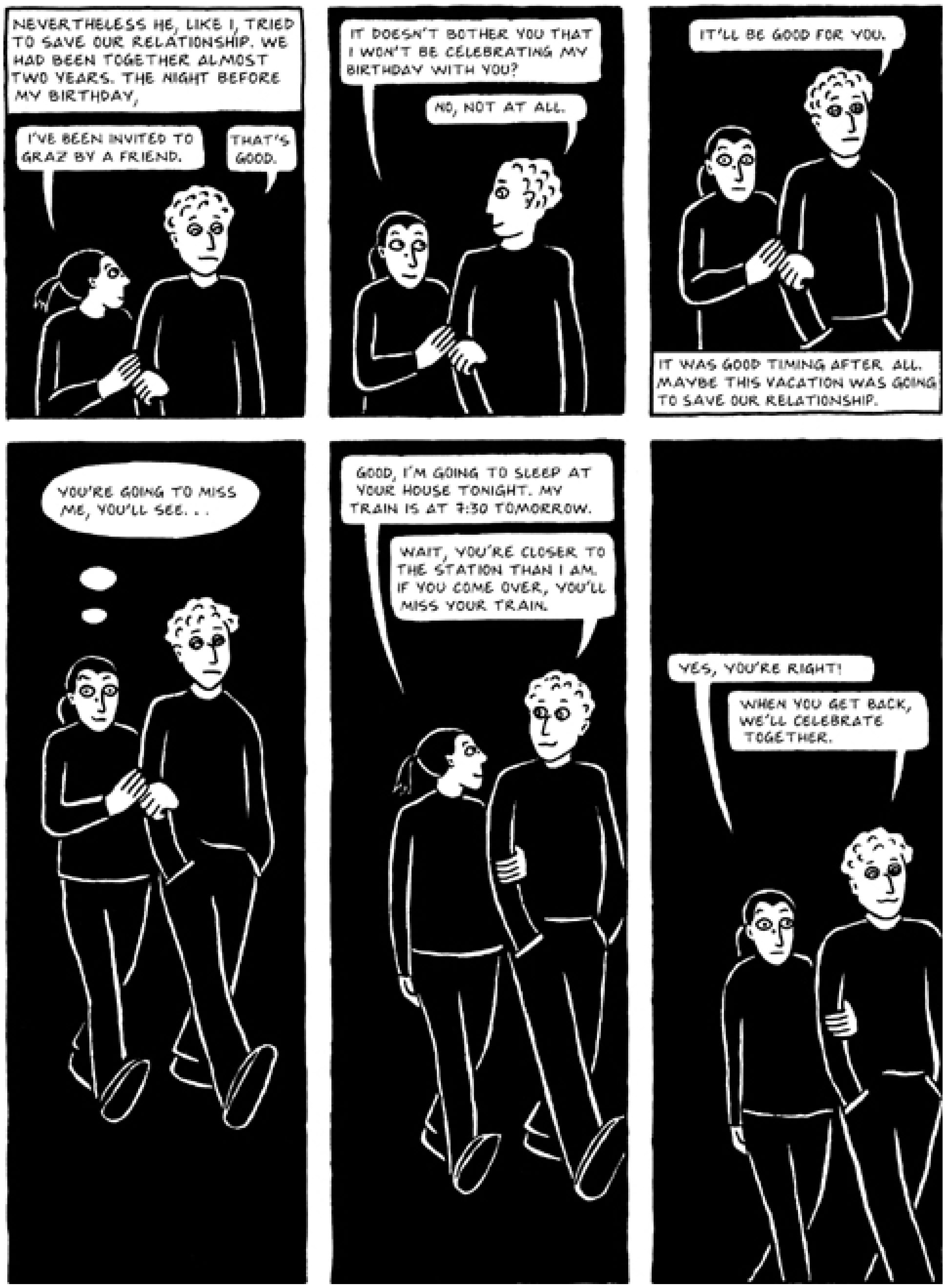

I WAS SO BUSY I DIDN'T NOTICE WHEN THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR ARRIVED.
MARJANE SATRAPI! THE PRINCIPAL WANTS TO SEE YOU.
I SAW THAT YOU HAD THE BEST SCORE FOR THE FRENCH BAC. ALL MY CONGRATULATIONS.
THANK YOU, SIR.
HAVE A SEAT.
IF YOU WILL, THE USAGE OF CERTAIN SUBSTANCES DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME EFFECT ON EVERYONE. IN CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS, IT CAN LEAD TO DEPLORABLE CONSEQUENCES.
LET ME EXPLAIN MYSELF. WE HAVE A REAL PROBLEM WITH THE CONSUMPTION OF CANNABIS IN THIS SCHOOL.
WHOEVER PROCURES IT FOR THE STUDENTS OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT COULD BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.
YOU ARE INTELLIGENT AND I TRUST I WON'T HAVE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THIS A SECOND TIME.
NO, YOU WON'T HAVE TO.
REMEMBER YOURSELF, SATRAPI, I'M COUNTING ON YOU!
YES, YES.
I WAS VERY SCARED. IT WAS THE END OF MY CAREER.

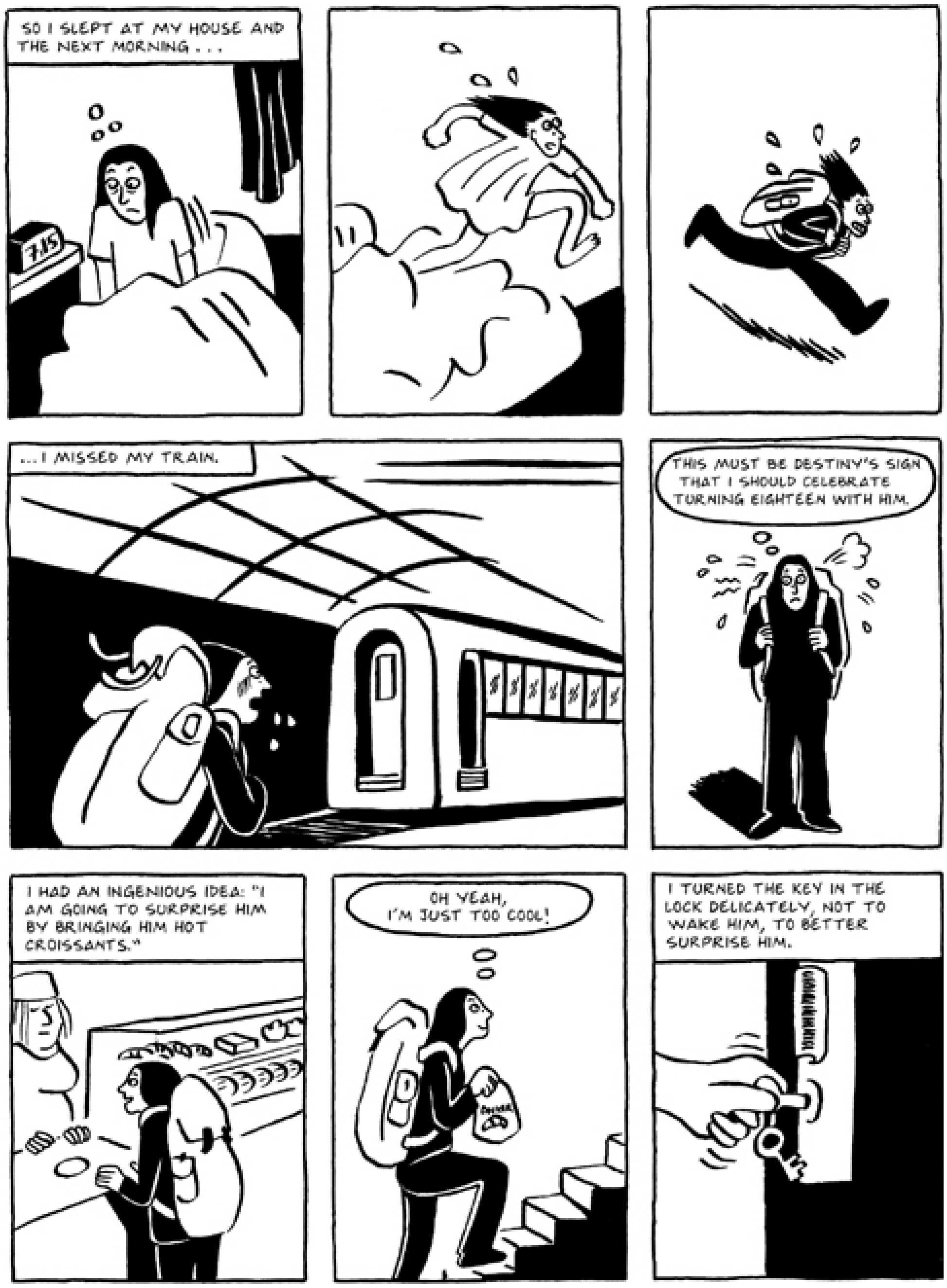

ADMITTEDLY, I WASN'T SELLING DRUGS ANYMORE, BUT I HAD STARTED TAKING MORE AND MORE. AT FIRST, MARKUS WAS VERY IMPRESSED,
ANOTHER ONE?? YOU'RE TOO STRONG!
THEN, HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME,
IN THE NAME OF GOD! LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE BECOMING.
AND FINALLY, HE DISTANCED HIMSELF.
THIS DECADENT SIDE, WHICH HAD SO PLEASED HIM AT FIRST, ENDED UP PROFOUNDLY ANNOYING HIM.
I SHOULD SAY THAT I WAS SMOKING TOO MANY JOINTS. I WAS CONSTANTLY TIRED AND I OFTEN FELL ASLEEP.
THE DEFINITE INTEGRAL OF FUNCTION F ON...
MARJANE, ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT?
DO YOU FEEL WELL?
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, SIR? THAT I'M THE VEGETABLE THAT I REFUSED TO BECOME?
THAT I'M SO DISAPPOINTED IN MYSELF THAT I CAN NO LONGER LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR? THAT I HATE MYSELF?...
EVERYTHING'S FINE, SIR. I'M A LITTLE SICK, I FEEL VERY TIRED.
I REMAINED IN THIS STATE FOR THE REST OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, BUT THANKS TO THE REGISTERED LETTERS, SENT TO GOD EVERY DAY BY MY MOTHER, I GRADUATED BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH. I WAS RELIEVED.

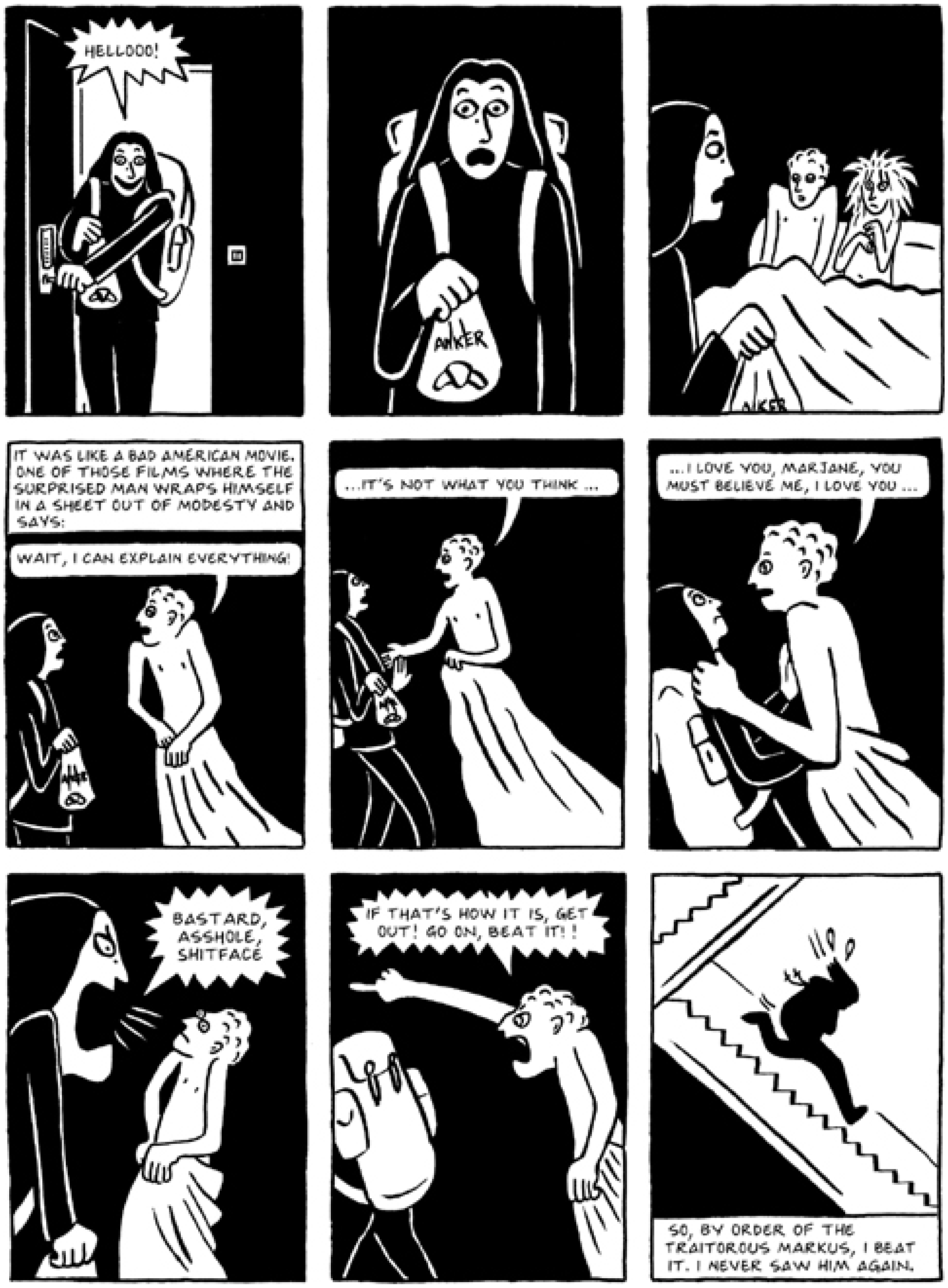

IT WAS 1988. MARKUS HAD STARTED STUDYING THEATER. I HAD REGISTERED AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT I NEVER WENT.
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO OUT?
I DON'T HAVE TIME, MY EXAMS ARE NEXT WEEK.
THIS SAME YEAR, I BECAME AWARE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA WAS NAMED KURT WALDHEIM.
THROUGH MARKUS, I HAD GOTTEN TO KNOW SOME OTHER STUDENTS. WE WOULD OFTEN GET TOGETHER AT THE CAFÉ HAWELKA, WHERE WE DISCUSSED POLITICS.
IT'S THE RETURN OF NAZISM, IT'S SERIOUS.
WE SHOULDN'T EXAGGERATE. WALDHEIM WAS ELECTED A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY RADICAL CHANGES, WE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? WE'VE GONE FROM SOCIALISM TO NAZISM.
PERSONALLY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THIS DIFFERENCE. THE FIRST TIME I SAW SKINHEADS WAS IN 1984. AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT MEANT. AND I DIDN'T SPEAK MUCH GERMAN. SO I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WANTED WITH ME. I SENSED THAT THEY WERE HOSTILE, BUT HAVING GROWN UP WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION, I KNEW WHAT TO DO IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION...
I KEPT A LOW PROFILE.
SINCE THEN, I HADN'T NOTICED THEIR NUMBERS GROWING.
ASSHOLES, THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU THINK THAT THERE AREN'T ANY WHERE I COME FROM? THEY'RE TEN TIMES MORE FEARSOME THAN YOURS. IN IRAN, THEY KILL THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T THINK LIKE THE LEADERS!
IT'S INTERESTING TO HAVE AN OUTSIDE OPINION.
YES, IT'S TRUE.


DURING THIS PERIOD, THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION, LIKE MOST YOUNG VIENNESE, WERE VERY POLITICIZED. THEY DEMONSTRATED EVERY SO OFTEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER. SOMETIMES I JOINED THEM.
THEY SAID THAT THE OLD NAZIS HAD BEEN TEACHING "MEIN KAMPF" IN THEIR HOMES TO NEW NAZIS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 80S, THAT SOON THERE WOULD BE A RISE IN THE EXTREME RIGHT THROUGHOUT EUROPE.
IT'S CRAZY HOW PEOPLE ARE ALL COWARDS. AND HERE WE ARE IN VIENNA. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW IT MUST BE IN THE TYROL!!
BUT I'VE BEEN TO THE TYROL, I THOUGHT THEY WERE VERY NICE.
MY FRIEND'S FATHER EVEN MADE ME A FRAME ...
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A GIRL. IF YOU WERE A BOY WITH FRIZZY HAIR AND YOUR SKIN WAS A LITTLE DARKER, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN LIKE THAT.
I ASKED MYSELF IF THEY WOULD HAVE SAT BESIDE ME IF I HAD BEEN A FRIZZY-HAIRED AND DARK-SKINNED BOY?

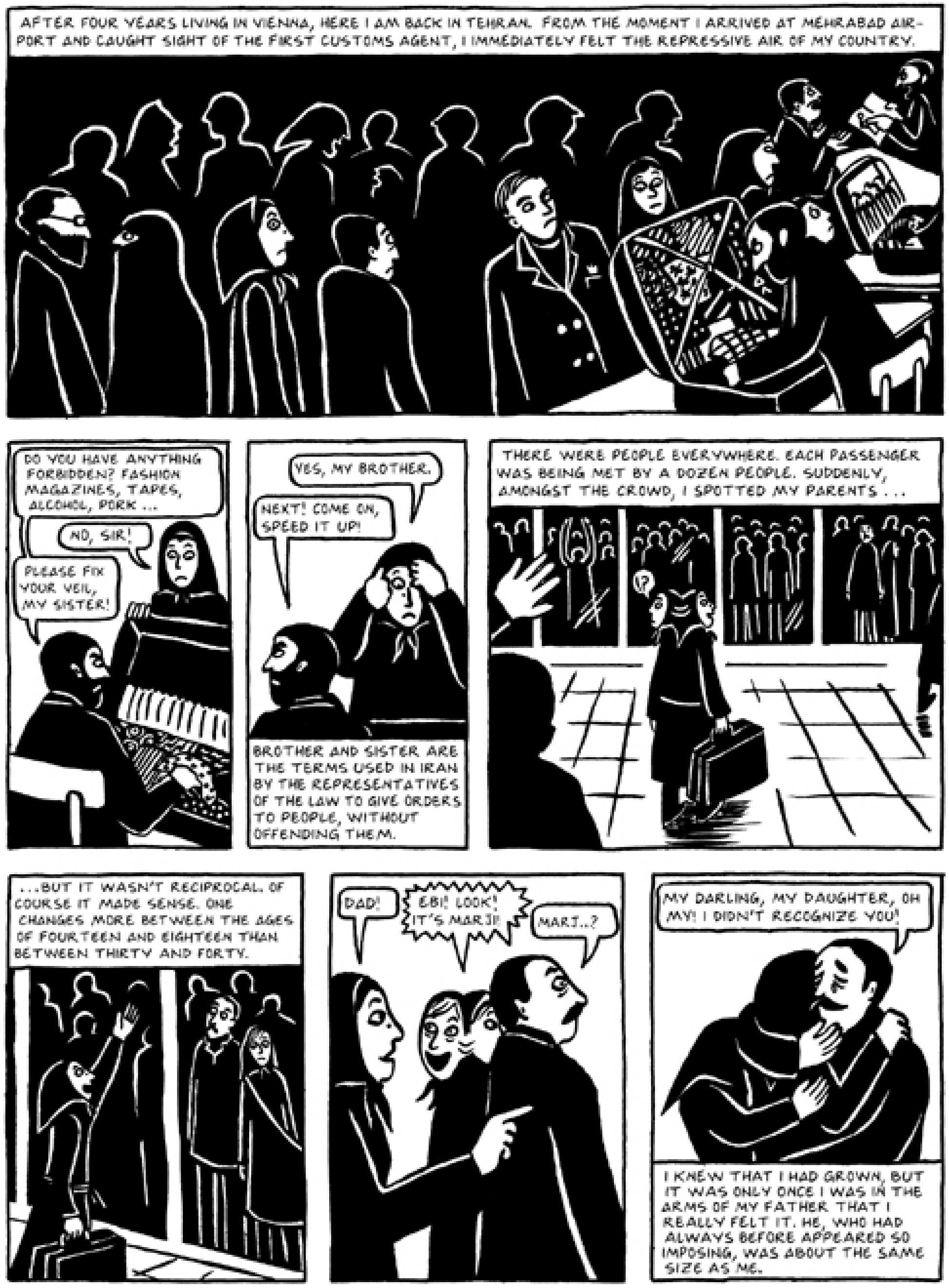

AS FOR MARKUS, HE NEVER PARTICIPATED IN ANYTHING. HE WAS WRITING HIS PLAY.
YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US?
UHH, NO! I'M WORKING, I DON'T HAVE TIME.
AND ANYWAY, IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. WALDHEIM WAS DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED. IT WAS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.
CLICK CLICK
AND YOUR CONSCIENCE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE?
I WRITE. CULTURE AND EDUCATION ARE THE LETHAL WEAPONS AGAINST ALL KINDS OF FUNDAMENTALISM. WE HAVE TO EDUCATE THE PEOPLE SO THAT THEY DON'T VOTE FOR NAZIS.
YEAH, THE INTELLECTUALS ARE TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE THEIR TIME SHOUTING!
WHATEVER ..
IN ANY CASE, IT'S THE COWARDICE OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO GIVE DICTATORS THE CHANCE TO INSTALL THEMSELVES!
THESE ARGUMENTS MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF OUR STORY.

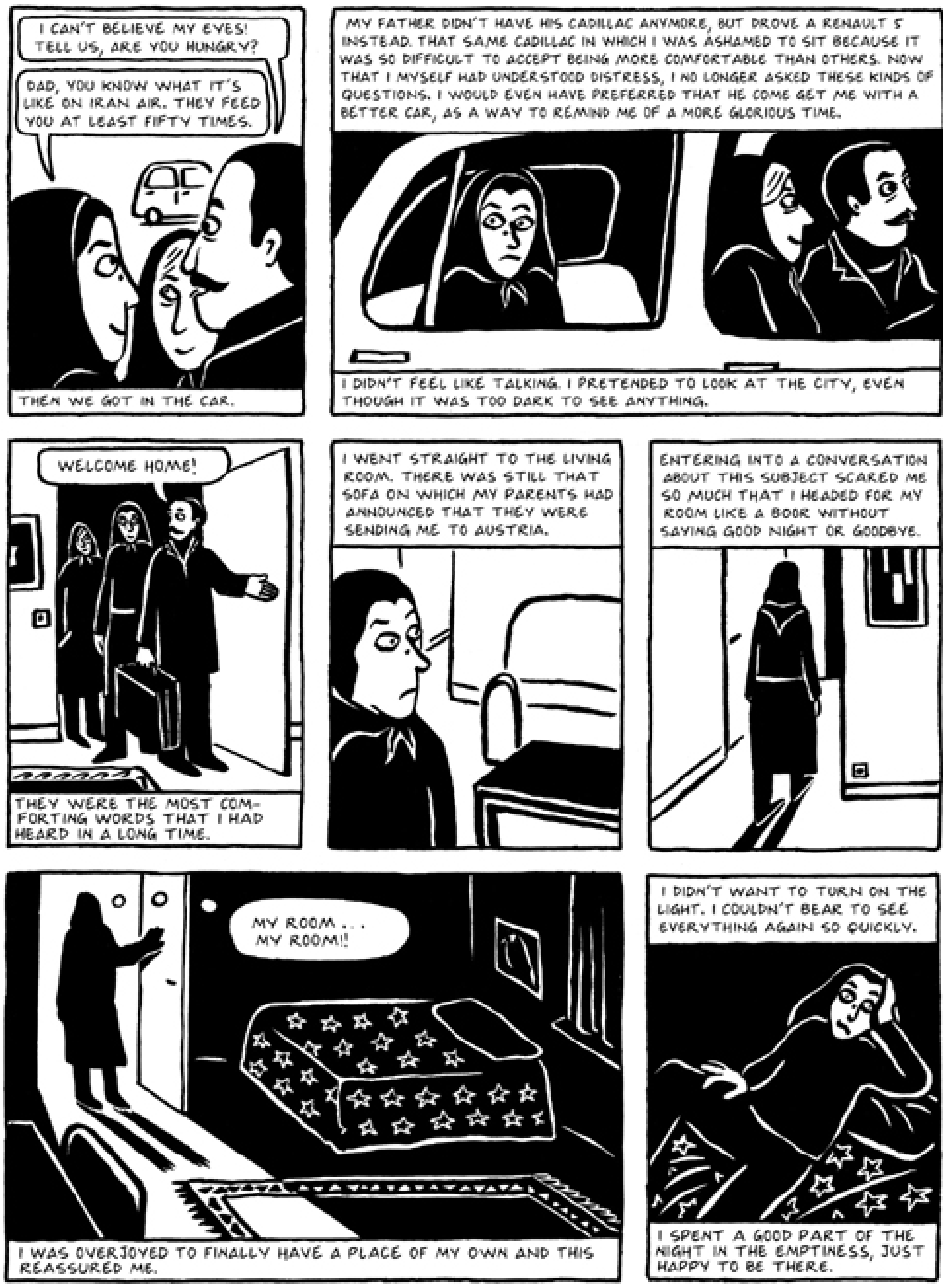

NEVERTHELESS HE, LIKE I, TRIED TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP. WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST TWO YEARS. THE NIGHT BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY,
I'VE BEEN INVITED TO GRAZ BY A FRIEND.
THAT'S GOOD.
IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU THAT I WON'T BE CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY WITH YOU?
NO, NOT AT ALL.
IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU.
IT WAS GOOD TIMING AFTER ALL. MAYBE THIS VACATION WAS GOING TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP.
YOU'RE GOING TO MISS ME, YOU'LL SEE. . .
GOOD, I'M GOING TO SLEEP AT YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT. MY TRAIN IS AT 7:30 TOMORROW.
WAIT, YOU'RE CLOSER TO THE STATION THAN I AM. IF YOU COME OVER, YOU'LL MISS YOUR TRAIN.
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT!
WHEN YOU GET BACK, WE'LL CELEBRATE TOGETHER.

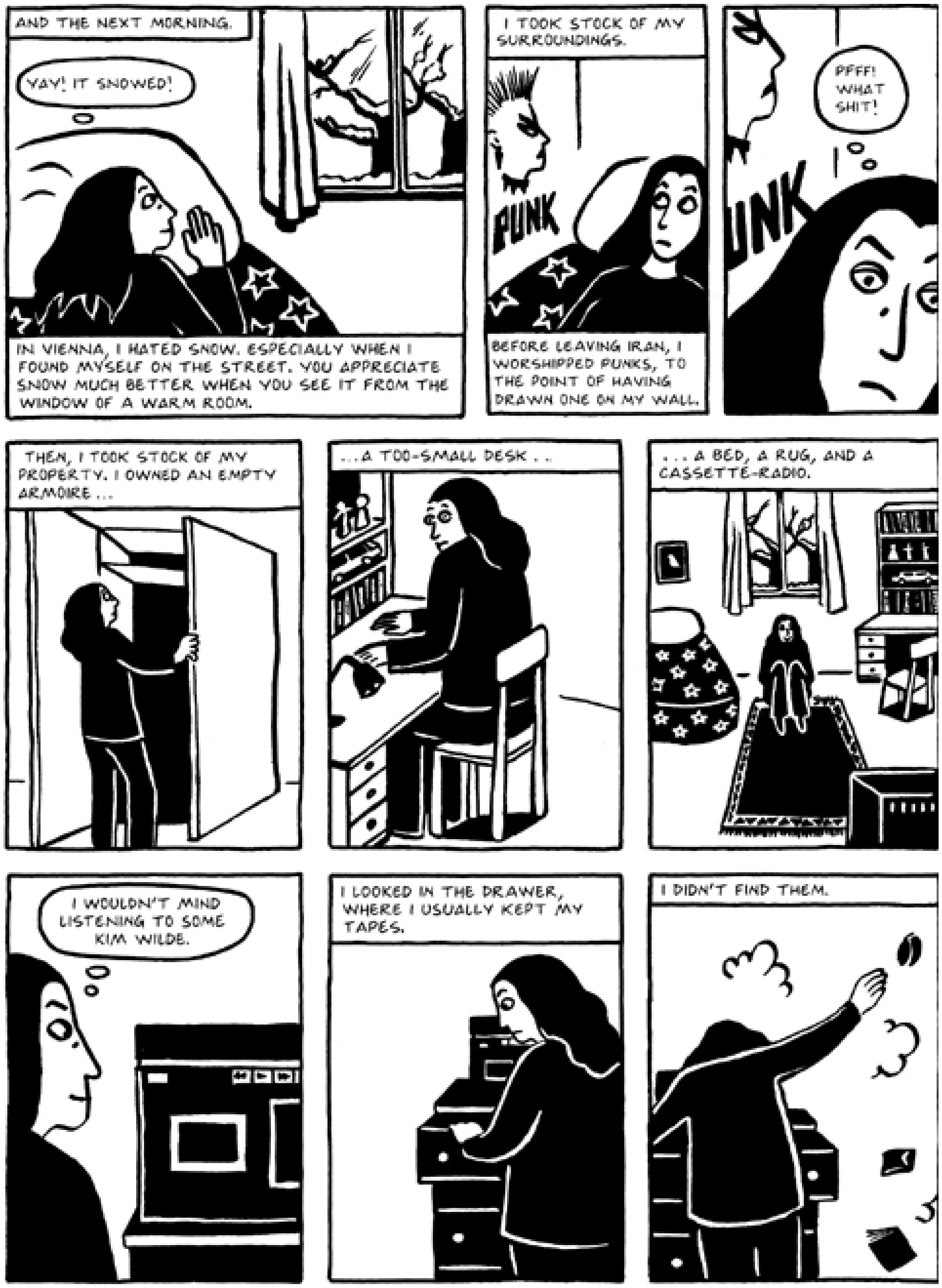

SO I SLEPT AT MY HOUSE AND THE NEXT MORNING . . .
7.15
. . . I MISSED MY TRAIN.
THIS MUST BE DESTINY'S SIGN THAT I SHOULD CELEBRATE TURNING EIGHTEEN WITH HIM.
I HAD AN INGENIOUS IDEA: "I AM GOING TO SURPRISE HIM BY BRINGING HIM HOT CROISSANTS."
OH YEAH, I'M JUST TOO COOL!
I TURNED THE KEY IN THE LOCK DELICATELY, NOT TO WAKE HIM, TO BETTER SURPRISE HIM.

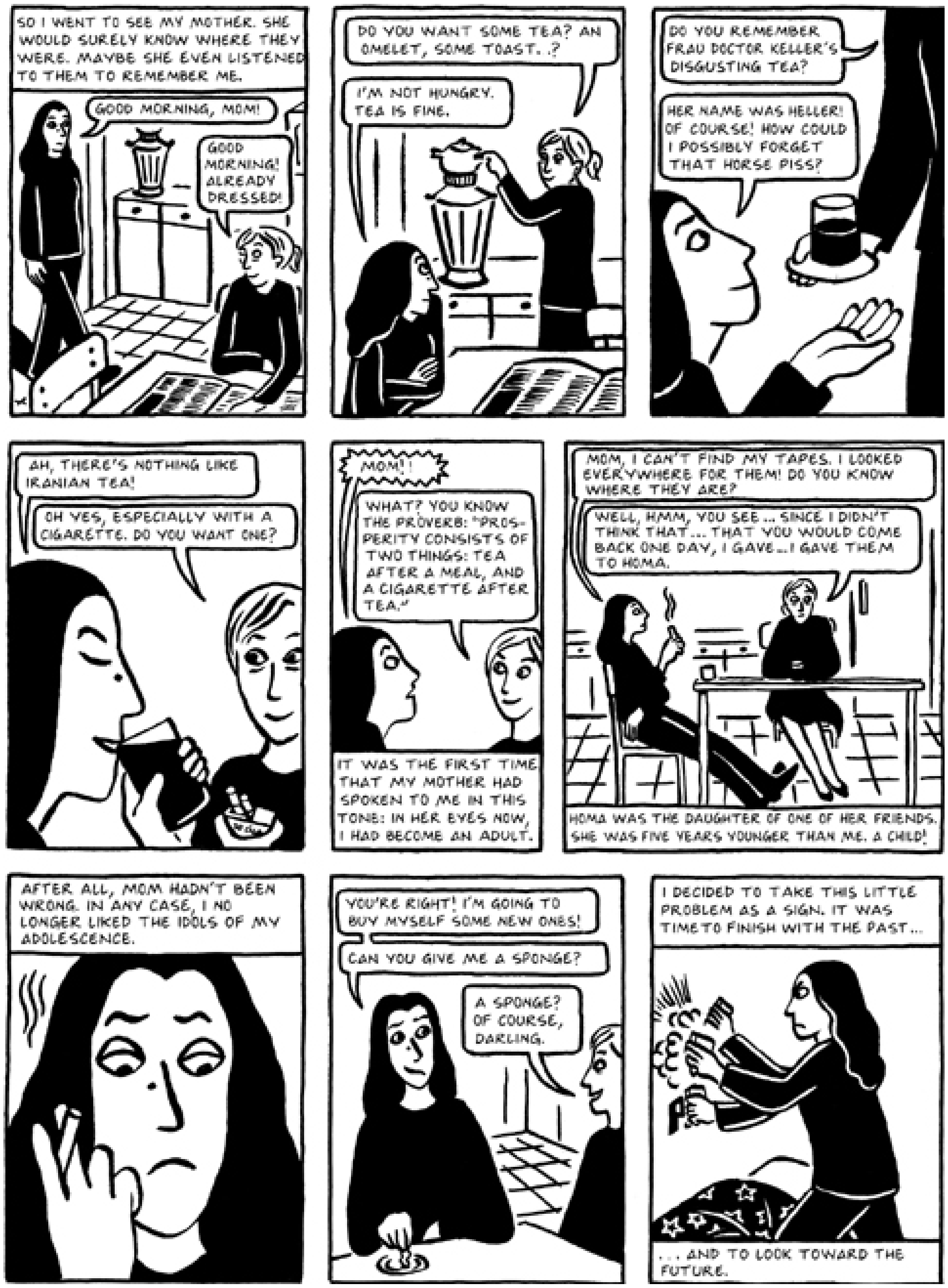

HELLOOO!
ANKER
ANKER
IT WAS LIKE A BAD AMERICAN MOVIE, ONE OF THOSE FILMS WHERE THE SURPRISED MAN WRAPS HIMSELF IN A SHEET OUT OF MODESTY AND SAYS:
WAIT, I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!
...IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK ...
...I LOVE YOU, MARJANE, YOU MUST BELIEVE ME, I LOVE YOU ...
BASTARD, ASSHOLE, SHITFACE
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, GET OUT! GO ON, BEAT IT!!
SO, BY ORDER OF THE TRAITOROUS MARKUS, I BEAT IT. I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

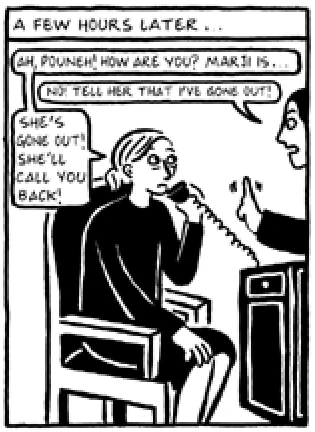
# THE RETURN

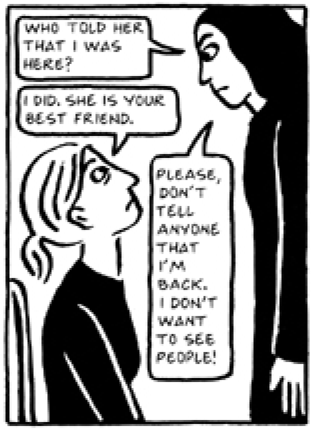

AFTER FOUR YEARS LIVING IN VIENNA, HERE I AM BACK IN TEHRAN. FROM THE MOMENT I ARRIVED AT MEHRABAD AIRPORT AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIRST CUSTOMS AGENT, I IMMEDIATELY FELT THE REPRESSIVE AIR OF MY COUNTRY.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING FORBIDDEN? FASHION MAGAZINES, TAPES, ALCOHOL, PORK ...
NO, SIR!
PLEASE FIX YOUR VEIL, MY SISTER!
YES, MY BROTHER.
NEXT! COME ON, SPEED IT UP!
BROTHER AND SISTER ARE THE TERMS USED IN IRAN BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LAW TO GIVE ORDERS TO PEOPLE, WITHOUT OFFENDING THEM.
THERE WERE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. EACH PASSENGER WAS BEING MET BY A DOZEN PEOPLE. SUDDENLY, AMONGST THE CROWD, I SPOTTED MY PARENTS ...
?!
...BUT IT WASN'T RECIPROCAL. OF COURSE IT MADE SENSE. ONE CHANGES MORE BETWEEN THE AGES OF FOURTEEN AND EIGHTEEN THAN BETWEEN THIRTY AND FORTY.
DAD!
EBI! LOOK! IT'S MARJI!
MARJI..?
MY DARLING, MY DAUGHTER, OH MY! I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU!
I KNEW THAT I HAD GROWN, BUT IT WAS ONLY ONCE I WAS IN THE ARMS OF MY FATHER THAT I REALLY FELT IT. HE, WHO HAD ALWAYS BEFORE APPEARED SO IMPOSING, WAS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS ME.

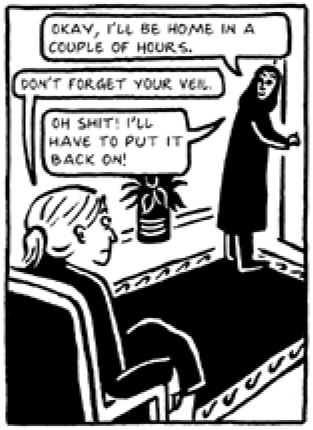

I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES! TELL US, ARE YOU HUNGRY?
DAD, YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE ON IRAN AIR. THEY FEED YOU AT LEAST FIFTY TIMES.
THEN WE GOT IN THE CAR.
MY FATHER DIDN'T HAVE HIS CADILLAC ANYMORE, BUT DROVE A RENAULT 5 INSTEAD. THAT SAME CADILLAC IN WHICH I WAS ASHAMED TO SIT BECAUSE IT WAS SO DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT BEING MORE COMFORTABLE THAN OTHERS. NOW THAT I MYSELF HAD UNDERSTOOD DISTRESS, I NO LONGER ASKED THESE KINDS OF QUESTIONS. I WOULD EVEN HAVE PREFERRED THAT HE COME GET ME WITH A BETTER CAR, AS A WAY TO REMIND ME OF A MORE GLORIOUS TIME.
I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE TALKING. I PRETENDED TO LOOK AT THE CITY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING.
WELCOME HOME!
THEY WERE THE MOST COMFORTING WORDS THAT I HAD HEARD IN A LONG TIME.
I WENT STRAIGHT TO THE LIVING ROOM. THERE WAS STILL THAT SOFA ON WHICH MY PARENTS HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE SENDING ME TO AUSTRIA.
ENTERING INTO A CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS SUBJECT SCARED ME SO MUCH THAT I HEADED FOR MY ROOM LIKE A BOOR WITHOUT SAYING GOOD NIGHT OR GOODBYE.
MY ROOM . . . MY ROOM!!
I WAS OVERJOYED TO FINALLY HAVE A PLACE OF MY OWN AND THIS REASSURED ME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO TURN ON THE LIGHT. I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE EVERYTHING AGAIN SO QUICKLY.
I SPENT A GOOD PART OF THE NIGHT IN THE EMPTINESS, JUST HAPPY TO BE THERE.


AND THE NEXT MORNING.
YAY! IT SNOWED!
IN VIENNA, I HATED SNOW. ESPECIALLY WHEN I FOUND MYSELF ON THE STREET. YOU APPRECIATE SNOW MUCH BETTER WHEN YOU SEE IT FROM THE WINDOW OF A WARM ROOM.
I TOOK STOCK OF MY SURROUNDINGS.
PUNK
BEFORE LEAVING IRAN, I WORSHIPPED PUNKS, TO THE POINT OF HAVING DRAWN ONE ON MY WALL.
PFFF! WHAT SHIT!
UNK
THEN, I TOOK STOCK OF MY PROPERTY. I OWNED AN EMPTY ARMOIRE ...
...A TOO-SMALL DESK . .
. . . A BED, A RUG, AND A CASSETTE-RADIO.
I WOULDN'T MIND LISTENING TO SOME KIM WILDE.
I LOOKED IN THE DRAWER, WHERE I USUALLY KEPT MY TAPES.
I DIDN'T FIND THEM.

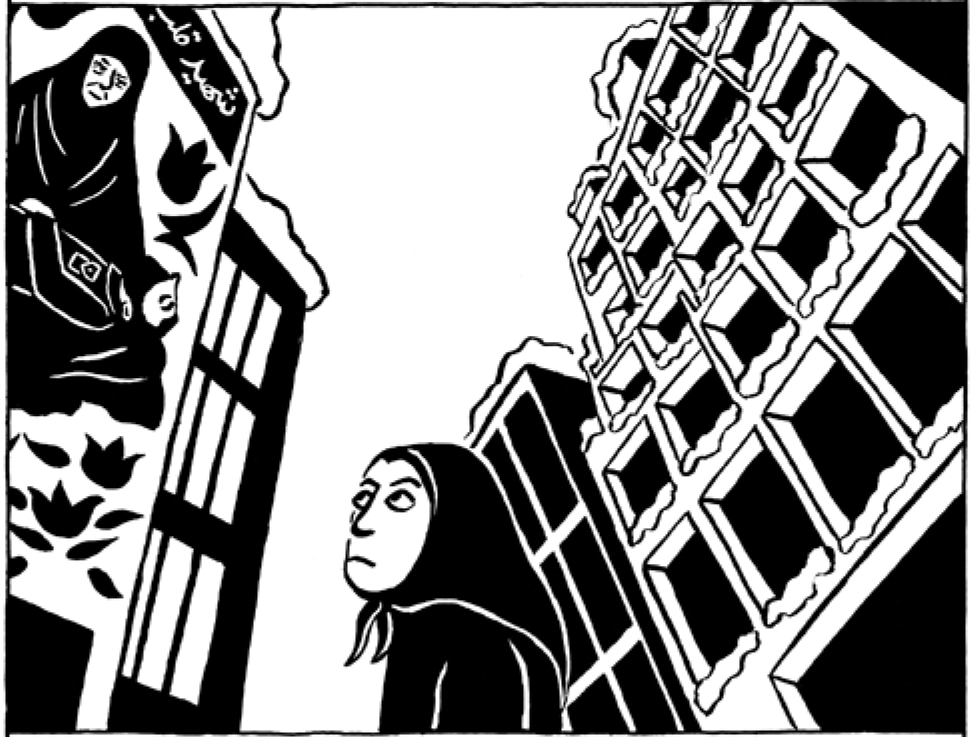

SO I WENT TO SEE MY MOTHER. SHE WOULD SURELY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE. MAYBE SHE EVEN LISTENED TO THEM TO REMEMBER ME.
GOOD MORNING, MOM!
GOOD MORNING! ALREADY DRESSED!
DO YOU WANT SOME TEA? AN OMELET, SOME TOAST. .?
I'M NOT HUNGRY. TEA IS FINE.
DO YOU REMEMBER FRAU DOCTOR KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?
HER NAME WAS HELLER! OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT HORSE PISS?
AH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IRANIAN TEA!
OH YES, ESPECIALLY WITH A CIGARETTE. DO YOU WANT ONE?
MOM!!
WHAT? YOU KNOW THE PROVERB: "PROSPERITY CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: TEA AFTER A MEAL, AND A CIGARETTE AFTER TEA."
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY MOTHER HAD SPOKEN TO ME IN THIS TONE: IN HER EYES NOW, I HAD BECOME AN ADULT.
MOM, I CAN'T FIND MY TAPES. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR THEM! DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?
WELL, HMM, YOU SEE... SINCE I DIDN'T THINK THAT... THAT YOU WOULD COME BACK ONE DAY, I GAVE... I GAVE THEM TO HOMA.
HOMA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF HER FRIENDS. SHE WAS FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME. A CHILD!
AFTER ALL, MOM HADN'T BEEN WRONG. IN ANY CASE, I NO LONGER LIKED THE IDOLS OF MY ADOLESCENCE.
YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M GOING TO BUY MYSELF SOME NEW ONES!
CAN YOU GIVE ME A SPONGE?
A SPONGE? OF COURSE, DARLING.
I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS LITTLE PROBLEM AS A SIGN. IT WAS TIME TO FINISH WITH THE PAST...
. . . AND TO LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE.


A FEW HOURS LATER . .
AH, POUNEH! HOW ARE YOU? MARJI IS . . .
NO! TELL HER THAT I'VE GONE OUT!
SHE'S GONE OUT! SHE'LL CALL YOU BACK!

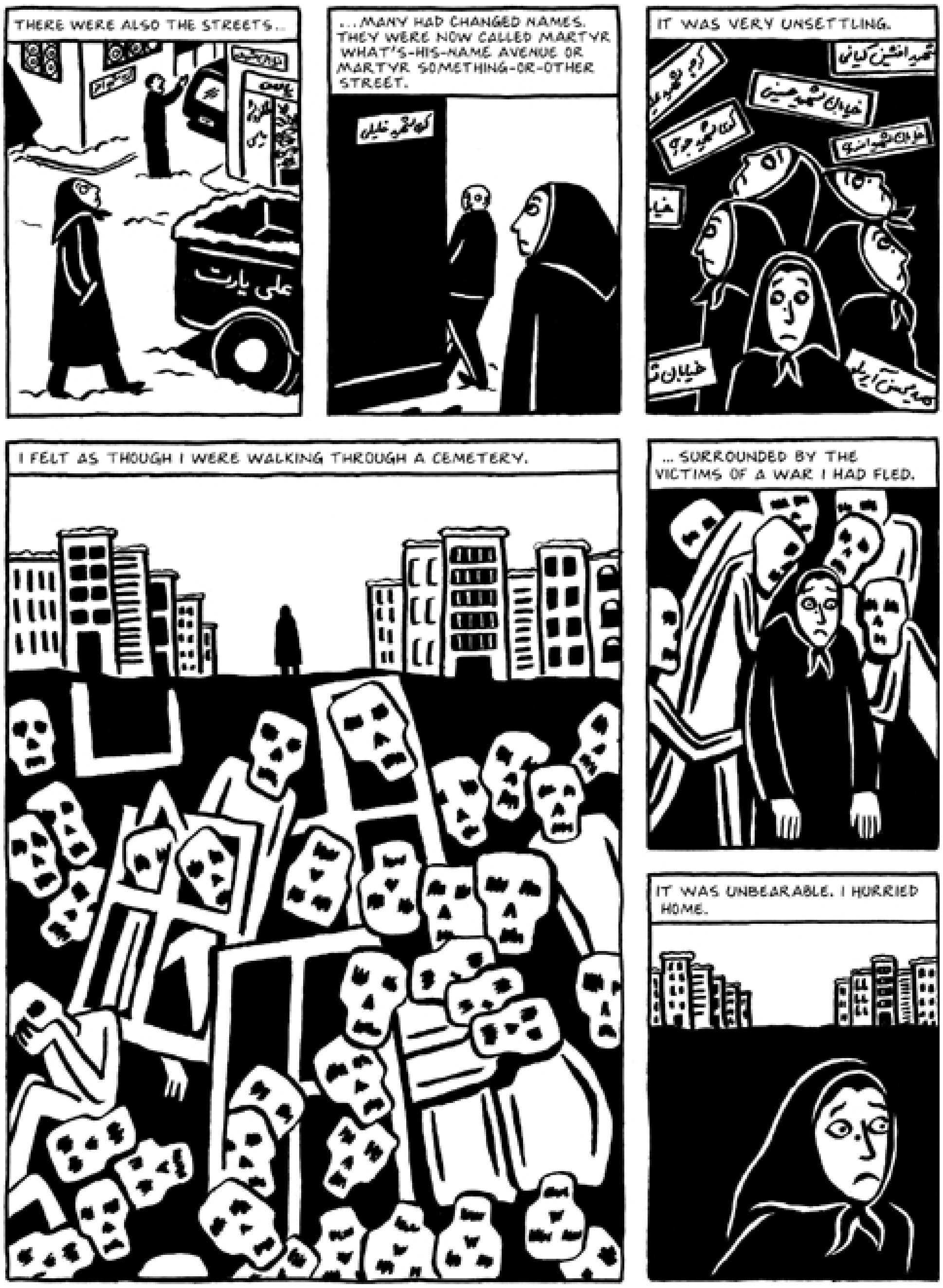

WHO TOLD HER THAT I WAS HERE?
I DID. SHE IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.
PLEASE, DON'T TELL ANYONE THAT I'M BACK. I DON'T WANT TO SEE PEOPLE!

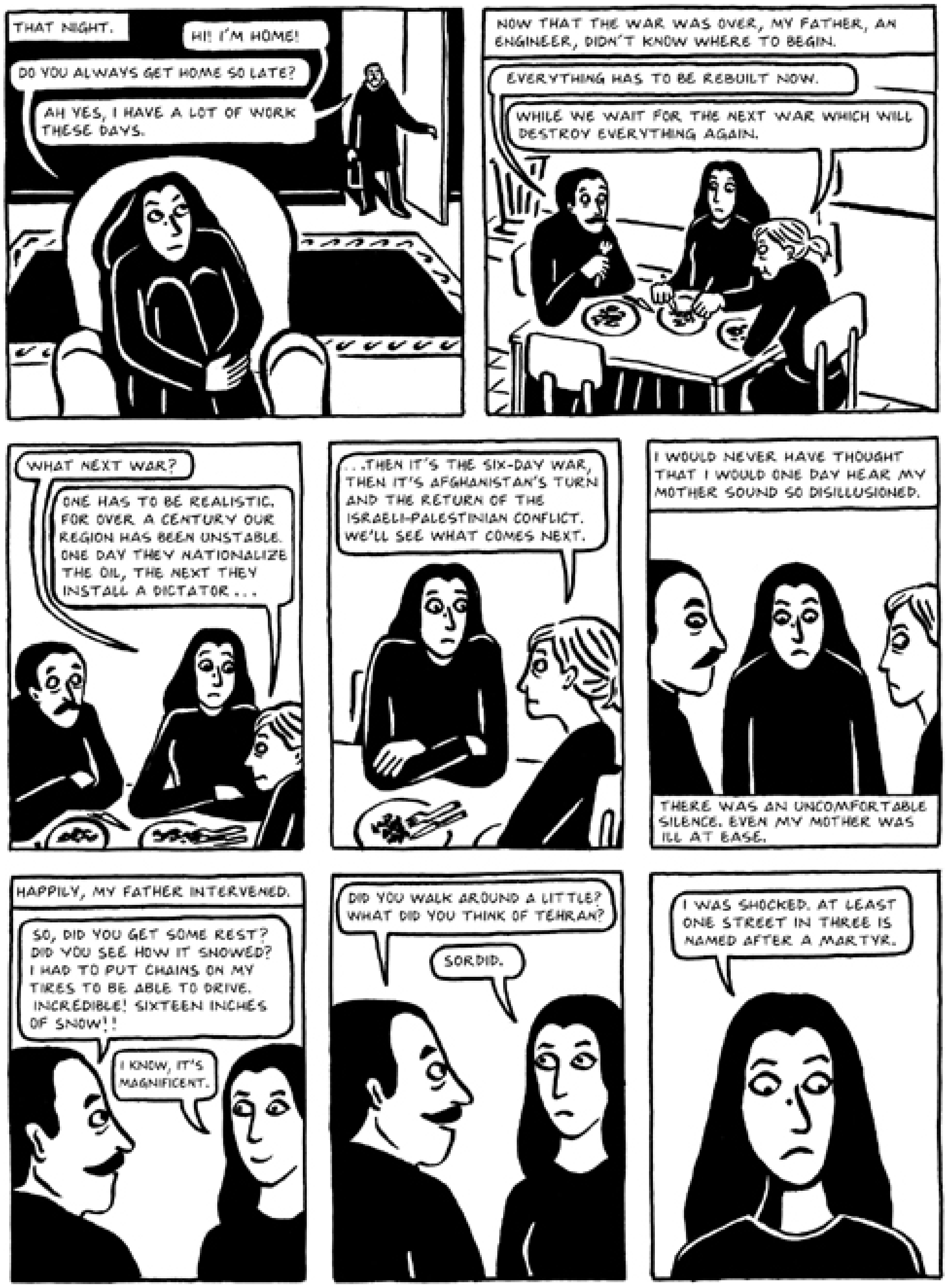

OKAY, I'LL BE HOME IN A COUPLE OF HOURS.
DON'T FORGET YOUR VEIL.
OH SHIT! I'LL HAVE TO PUT IT BACK ON!

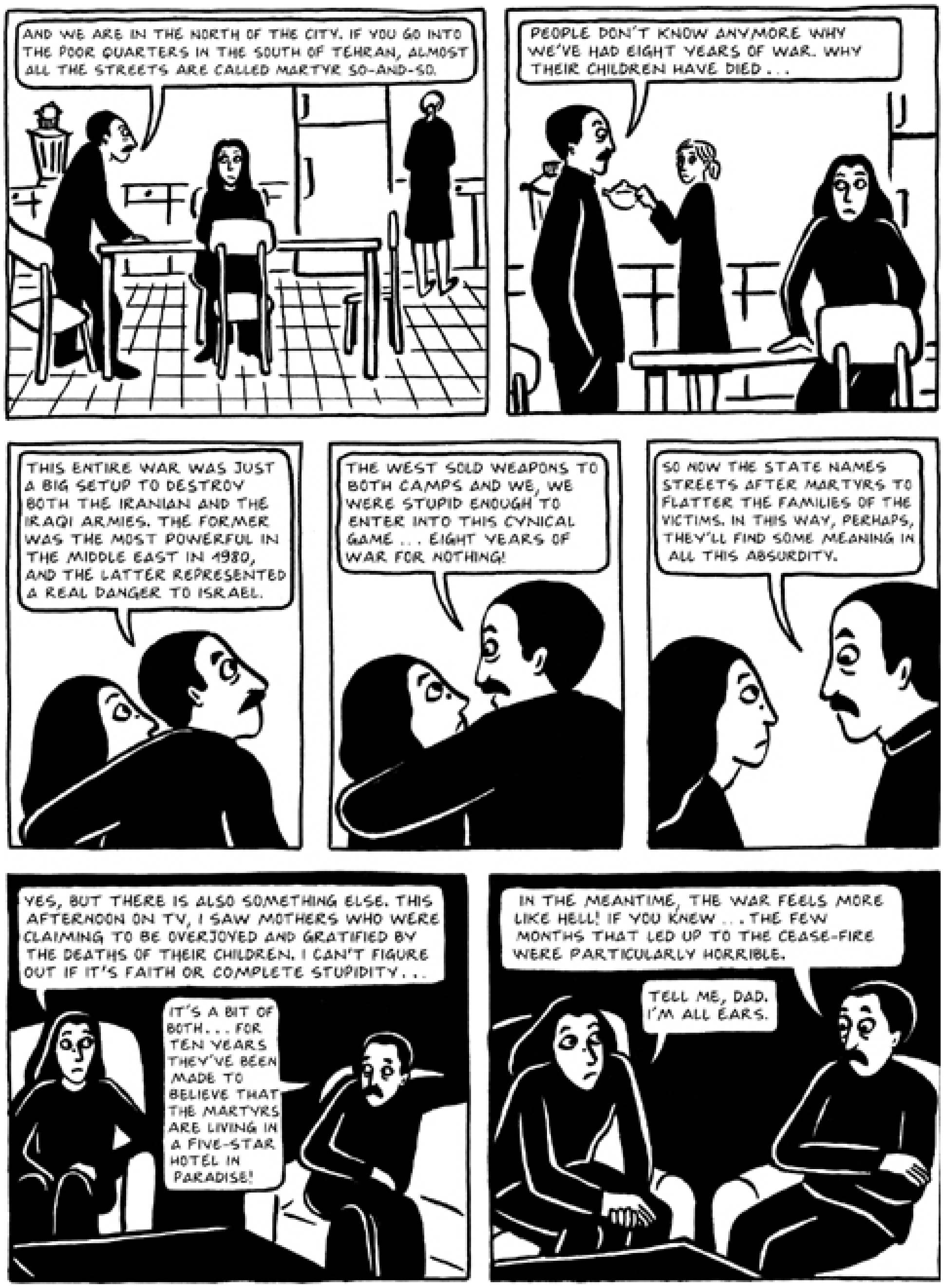
IT WASN'T JUST THE VEIL TO WHICH I HAD TO READJUST, THERE WERE ALSO ALL THE IMAGES: THE SIXTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH MURALS PRESENTING MARTYRS, ADORNED WITH SLOGANS HONORING THEM, SLOGANS LIKE "THE MARTYR IS THE HEART OF HISTORY" OR "I HOPE TO BE A MARTYR MYSELF" OR "A MARTYR LIVES FOREVER."

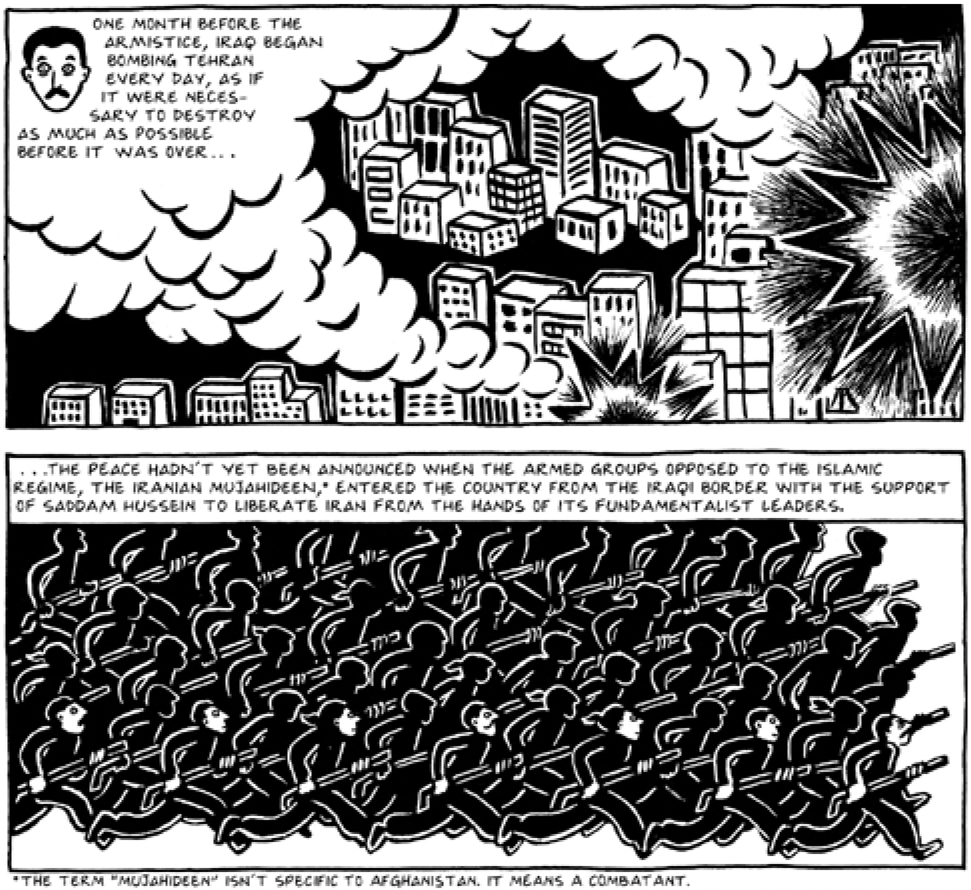


ESPECIALLY AFTER FOUR YEARS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, WHERE YOU WERE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ON THE WALLS "BEST SAUSAGES FOR 20 SHILLINGS," THE ROAD TO READJUSTMENT SEEMED VERY LONG TO ME.

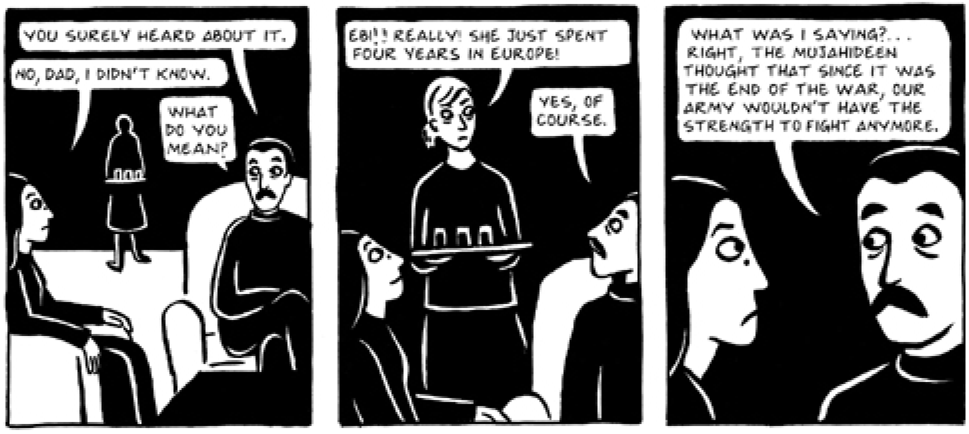

THERE WERE ALSO THE STREETS...
علی یارت
...MANY HAD CHANGED NAMES. THEY WERE NOW CALLED MARTYR WHAT'S-HIS-NAME AVENUE OR MARTYR SOMETHING-OR-OTHER STREET.
IT WAS VERY UNSETTLING.
I FELT AS THOUGH I WERE WALKING THROUGH A CEMETERY.
... SURROUNDED BY THE VICTIMS OF A WAR I HAD FLED.
IT WAS UNBEARABLE. I HURRIED HOME.

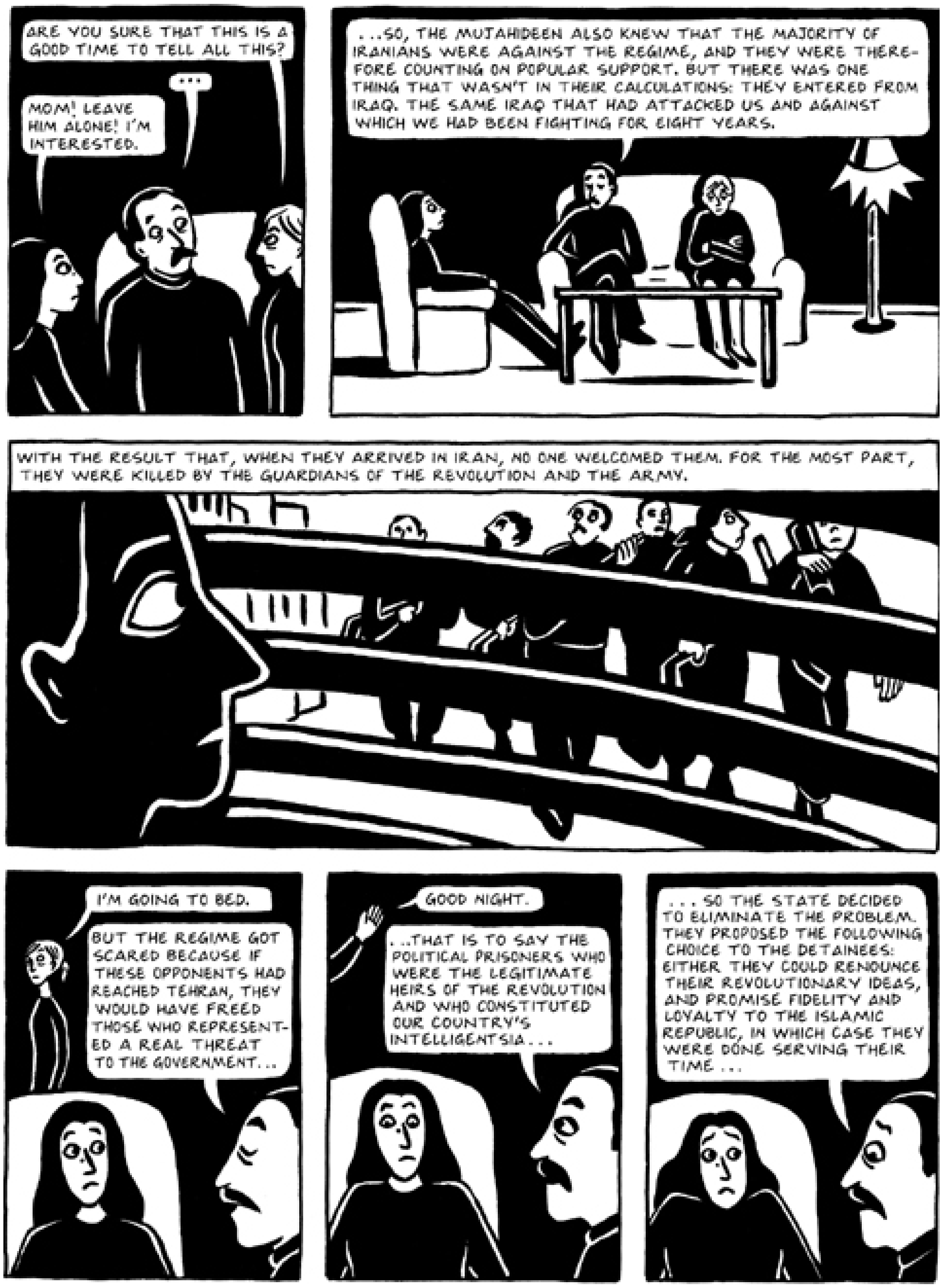

THAT NIGHT.
HI! I'M HOME!
DO YOU ALWAYS GET HOME SO LATE?
AH YES, I HAVE A LOT OF WORK THESE DAYS.
NOW THAT THE WAR WAS OVER, MY FATHER, AN ENGINEER, DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.
EVERYTHING HAS TO BE REBUILT NOW.
WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE NEXT WAR WHICH WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING AGAIN.
WHAT NEXT WAR?
ONE HAS TO BE REALISTIC. FOR OVER A CENTURY OUR REGION HAS BEEN UNSTABLE. ONE DAY THEY NATIONALIZE THE OIL, THE NEXT THEY INSTALL A DICTATOR...
...THEN IT'S THE SIX-DAY WAR, THEN IT'S AFGHANISTAN'S TURN AND THE RETURN OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT. WE'LL SEE WHAT COMES NEXT.
I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WOULD ONE DAY HEAR MY MOTHER SOUND SO DISILLUSIONED.
THERE WAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. EVEN MY MOTHER WAS ILL AT EASE.
HAPPILY, MY FATHER INTERVENED.
SO, DID YOU GET SOME REST? DID YOU SEE HOW IT SNOWED? I HAD TO PUT CHAINS ON MY TIRES TO BE ABLE TO DRIVE. INCREDIBLE! SIXTEEN INCHES OF SNOW!!
I KNOW, IT'S MAGNIFICENT.
DID YOU WALK AROUND A LITTLE? WHAT DID YOU THINK OF TEHRAN?
SORDID.
I WAS SHOCKED. AT LEAST ONE STREET IN THREE IS NAMED AFTER A MARTYR.

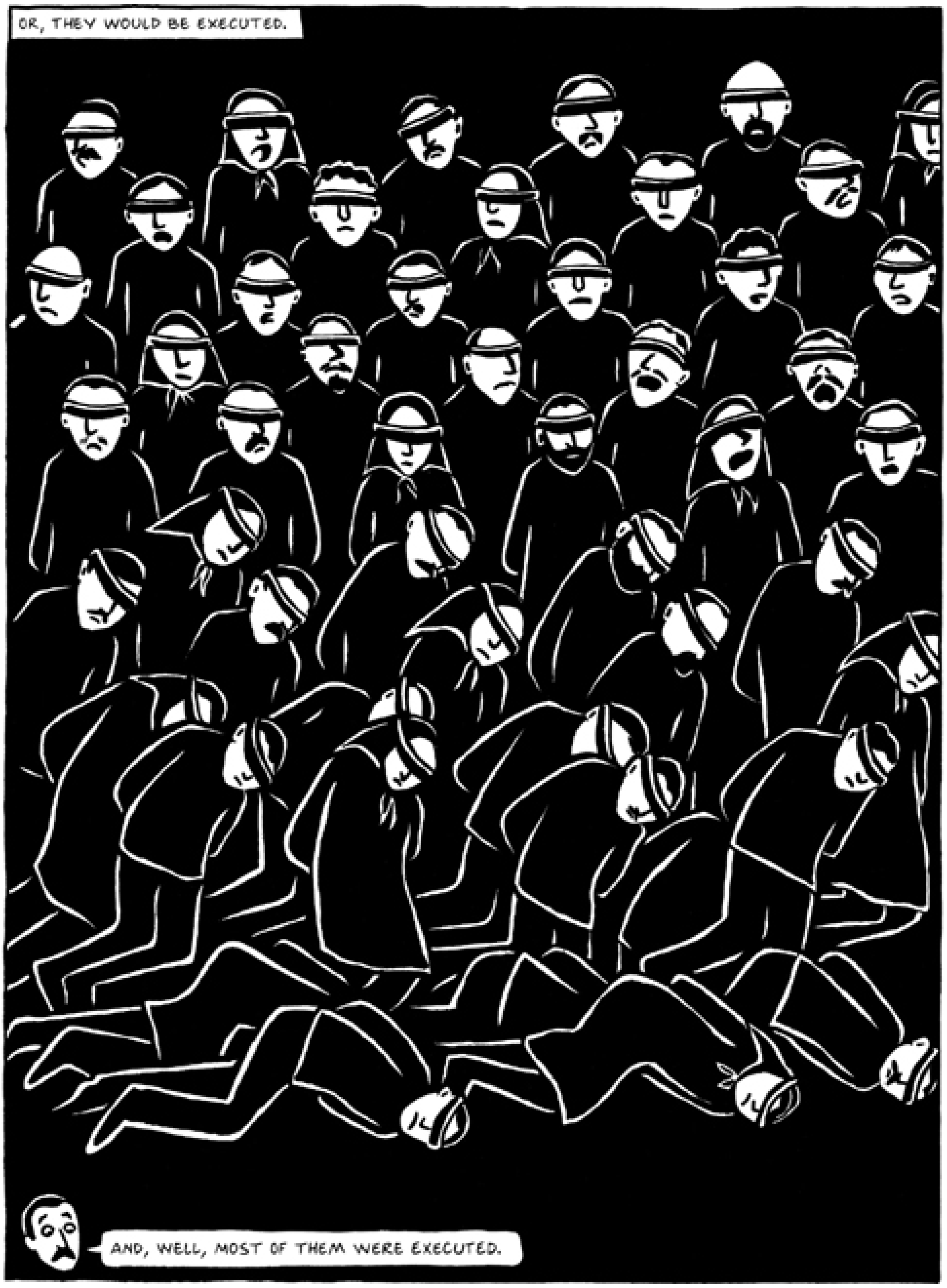

AND WE ARE IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY. IF YOU GO INTO THE POOR QUARTERS IN THE SOUTH OF TEHRAN, ALMOST ALL THE STREETS ARE CALLED MARTYR SO-AND-SO.
PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ANYMORE WHY WE'VE HAD EIGHT YEARS OF WAR. WHY THEIR CHILDREN HAVE DIED . . .
THIS ENTIRE WAR WAS JUST A BIG SETUP TO DESTROY BOTH THE IRANIAN AND THE IRAQI ARMIES. THE FORMER WAS THE MOST POWERFUL IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1980, AND THE LATTER REPRESENTED A REAL DANGER TO ISRAEL.
THE WEST SOLD WEAPONS TO BOTH CAMPS AND WE, WE WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO ENTER INTO THIS CYNICAL GAME . . . EIGHT YEARS OF WAR FOR NOTHING!
SO NOW THE STATE NAMES STREETS AFTER MARTYRS TO FLATTER THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS. IN THIS WAY, PERHAPS, THEY'LL FIND SOME MEANING IN ALL THIS ABSURDITY.
YES, BUT THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING ELSE. THIS AFTERNOON ON TV, I SAW MOTHERS WHO WERE CLAIMING TO BE OVERJOYED AND GRATIFIED BY THE DEATHS OF THEIR CHILDREN. I CAN'T FIGURE OUT IF IT'S FAITH OR COMPLETE STUPIDITY . . .
IT'S A BIT OF BOTH . . . FOR TEN YEARS THEY'VE BEEN MADE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MARTYRS ARE LIVING IN A FIVE-STAR HOTEL IN PARADISE!
IN THE MEANTIME, THE WAR FEELS MORE LIKE HELL! IF YOU KNEW . . . THE FEW MONTHS THAT LED UP TO THE CEASE-FIRE WERE PARTICULARLY HORRIBLE.
TELL ME, DAD. I'M ALL EARS.

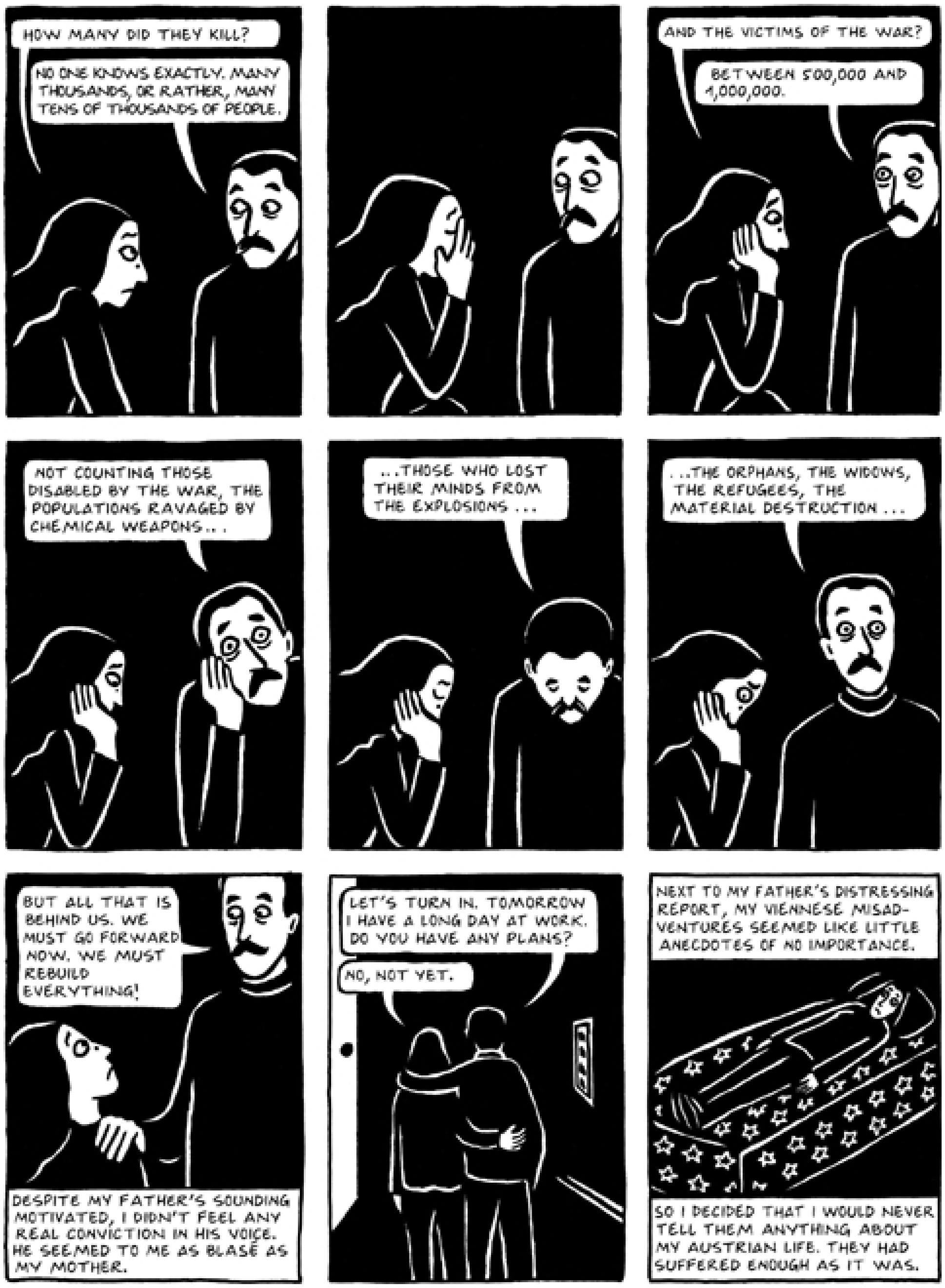

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE ARMISTICE, IRAQ BEGAN BOMBING TEHRAN EVERY DAY, AS IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO DESTROY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BEFORE IT WAS OVER...
...THE PEACE HADN'T YET BEEN ANNOUNCED WHEN THE ARMED GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE ISLAMIC REGIME, THE IRANIAN MUJAHIDEEN,* ENTERED THE COUNTRY FROM THE IRAQI BORDER WITH THE SUPPORT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN TO LIBERATE IRAN FROM THE HANDS OF ITS FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERS.

*THE TERM "MUJAHIDEEN" ISN'T SPECIFIC TO AFGHANISTAN. IT MEANS A COMBATANT.


YOU SURELY HEARD ABOUT IT.
NO, DAD, I DIDN'T KNOW.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
EBI!! REALLY! SHE JUST SPENT FOUR YEARS IN EUROPE!
YES, OF COURSE.
WHAT WAS I SAYING?... RIGHT, THE MUJAHIDEEN THOUGHT THAT SINCE IT WAS THE END OF THE WAR, OUR ARMY WOULDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FIGHT ANYMORE.

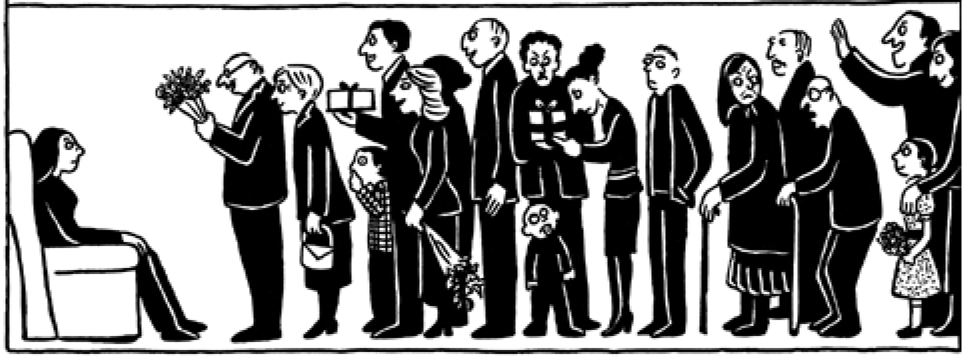

ARE YOU SURE THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TELL ALL THIS?
...
MOM! LEAVE HIM ALONE! I'M INTERESTED.
...SO, THE MUTAHIDEEN ALSO KNEW THAT THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS WERE AGAINST THE REGIME, AND THEY WERE THEREFORE COUNTING ON POPULAR SUPPORT. BUT THERE WAS ONE THING THAT WASN'T IN THEIR CALCULATIONS: THEY ENTERED FROM IRAQ. THE SAME IRAQ THAT HAD ATTACKED US AND AGAINST WHICH WE HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR EIGHT YEARS.
WITH THE RESULT THAT, WHEN THEY ARRIVED IN IRAN, NO ONE WELCOMED THEM. FOR THE MOST PART, THEY WERE KILLED BY THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE ARMY.
I'M GOING TO BED.
BUT THE REGIME GOT SCARED BECAUSE IF THESE OPPONENTS HAD REACHED TEHRAN, THEY WOULD HAVE FREED THOSE WHO REPRESENTED A REAL THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT...
GOOD NIGHT.
...THAT IS TO SAY THE POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO WERE THE LEGITIMATE HEIRS OF THE REVOLUTION AND WHO CONSTITUTED OUR COUNTRY'S INTELLIGENTSIA...
...SO THE STATE DECIDED TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM. THEY PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING CHOICE TO THE DETAINEES: EITHER THEY COULD RENOUNCE THEIR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS, AND PROMISE FIDELITY AND LOYALTY TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, IN WHICH CASE THEY WERE DONE SERVING THEIR TIME...

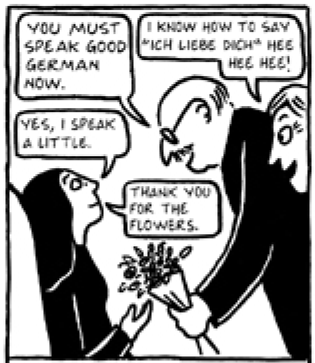

OR, THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED.
AND, WELL, MOST OF THEM WERE EXECUTED.


HOW MANY DID THEY KILL?
NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY. MANY THOUSANDS, OR RATHER, MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.
AND THE VICTIMS OF THE WAR?
BETWEEN 500,000 AND 1,000,000.
NOT COUNTING THOSE DISABLED BY THE WAR, THE POPULATIONS RAVAGED BY CHEMICAL WEAPONS...
...THOSE WHO LOST THEIR MINDS FROM THE EXPLOSIONS ...
...THE ORPHANS, THE WIDOWS, THE REFUGEES, THE MATERIAL DESTRUCTION ...
BUT ALL THAT IS BEHIND US. WE MUST GO FORWARD NOW. WE MUST REBUILD EVERYTHING!
DESPITE MY FATHER'S SOUNDING MOTIVATED, I DIDN'T FEEL ANY REAL CONVICTION IN HIS VOICE. HE SEEMED TO ME AS BLASÉ AS MY MOTHER.
LET'S TURN IN. TOMORROW I HAVE A LONG DAY AT WORK. DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS?
NO, NOT YET.
NEXT TO MY FATHER'S DISTRESSING REPORT, MY VIENNESE MISADVENTURES SEEMED LIKE LITTLE ANECDOTES OF NO IMPORTANCE.
SO I DECIDED THAT I WOULD NEVER TELL THEM ANYTHING ABOUT MY AUSTRIAN LIFE. THEY HAD SUFFERED ENOUGH AS IT WAS.

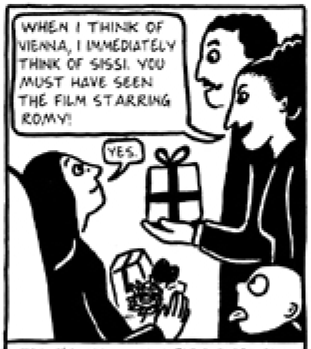
# THE JOKE

I HAD BEEN IN TEHRAN FOR TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY RELUCTANCE, IN THE END MY ENTIRE FAMILY CAME TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THEY KNEW ABOUT MY EUROPEAN FAILURE. I WAS SCARED THAT THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED.

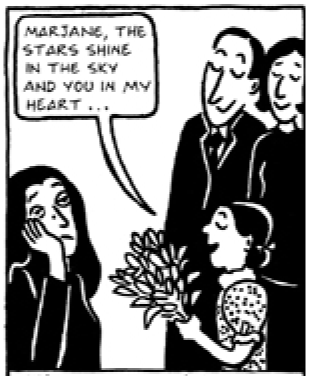



YOU MUST SPEAK GOOD GERMAN NOW.
I KNOW HOW TO SAY "ICH LIEBE DICH" HEE HEE HEE!
YES, I SPEAK A LITTLE.
THANK YOU FOR THE FLOWERS.

THIS IS UNCLE ARDESHIR, MY MOTHER'S UNCLE. HE'S RETIRED FROM THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.

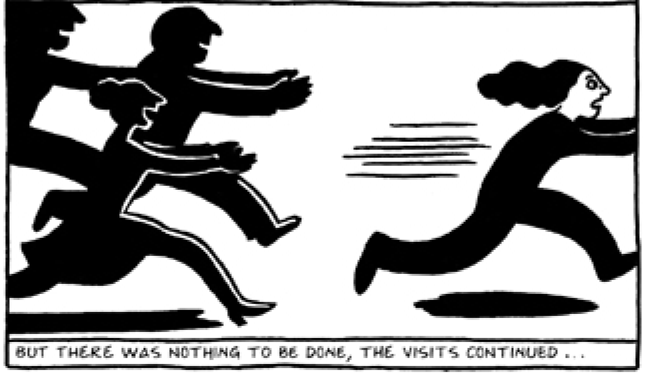

WHEN I THINK OF VIENNA, I IMMEDIATELY THINK OF SISSI. YOU MUST HAVE SEEN THE FILM STARRING ROMY!
YES.

THAT'S MINA, MY FIRST COUSIN. SHE'S AN IMBECILE. SHE TALKS ABOUT ROMY SCHNEIDER AS IF SHE WERE HER BEST FRIEND.


MARJANE, THE STARS SHINE IN THE SKY AND YOU IN MY HEART ...

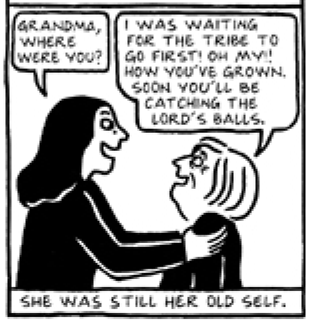
THESE ARE OUR NEIGHBORS. THEY'RE THE INCARNATION OF THE PERFECT FAMILY.

EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT THEY WERE COMING TO SEE ME OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND KINDNESS, I'D QUICKLY HAD ENOUGH OF RECEIVING THEM EVERY DAY.

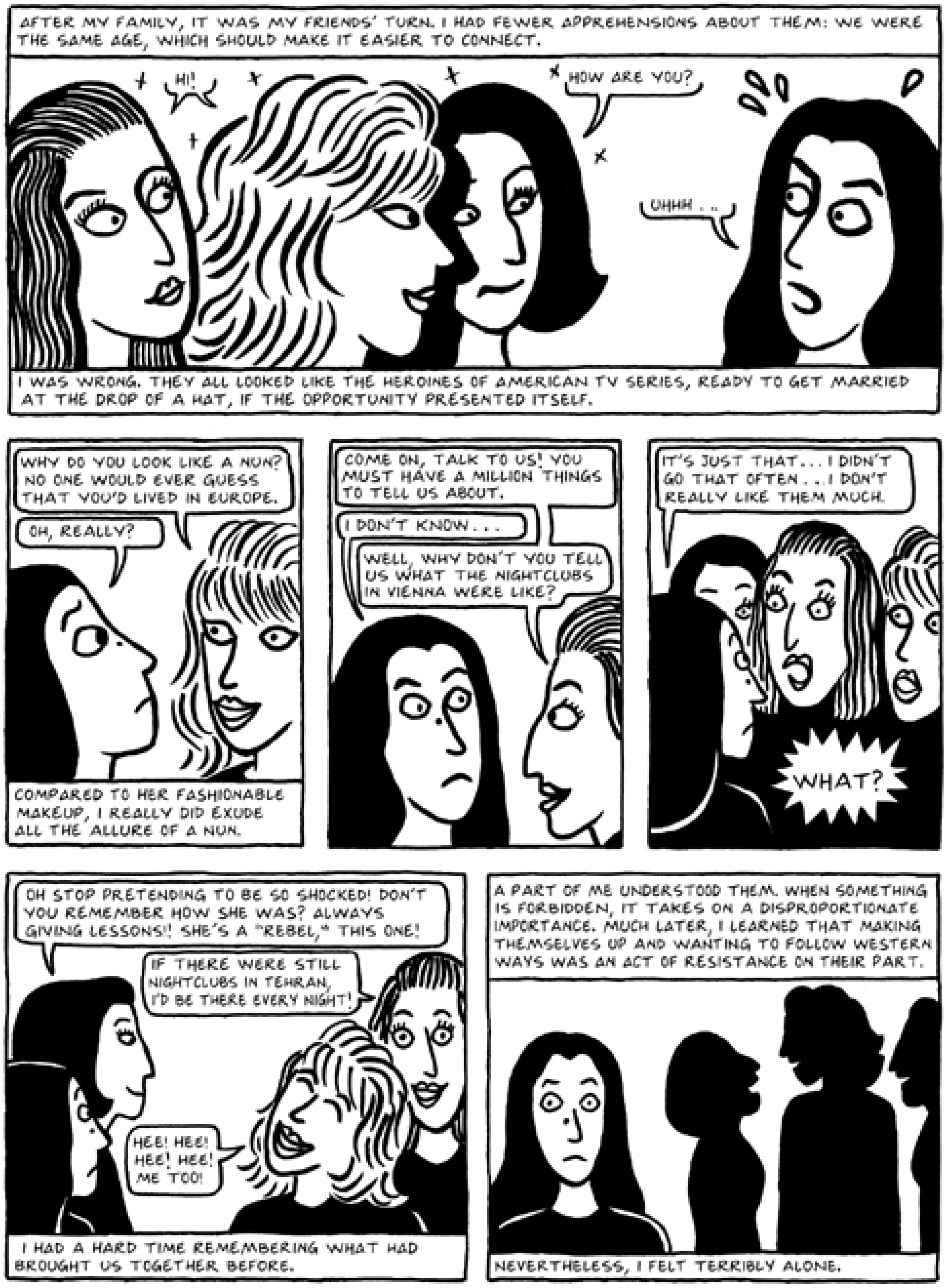


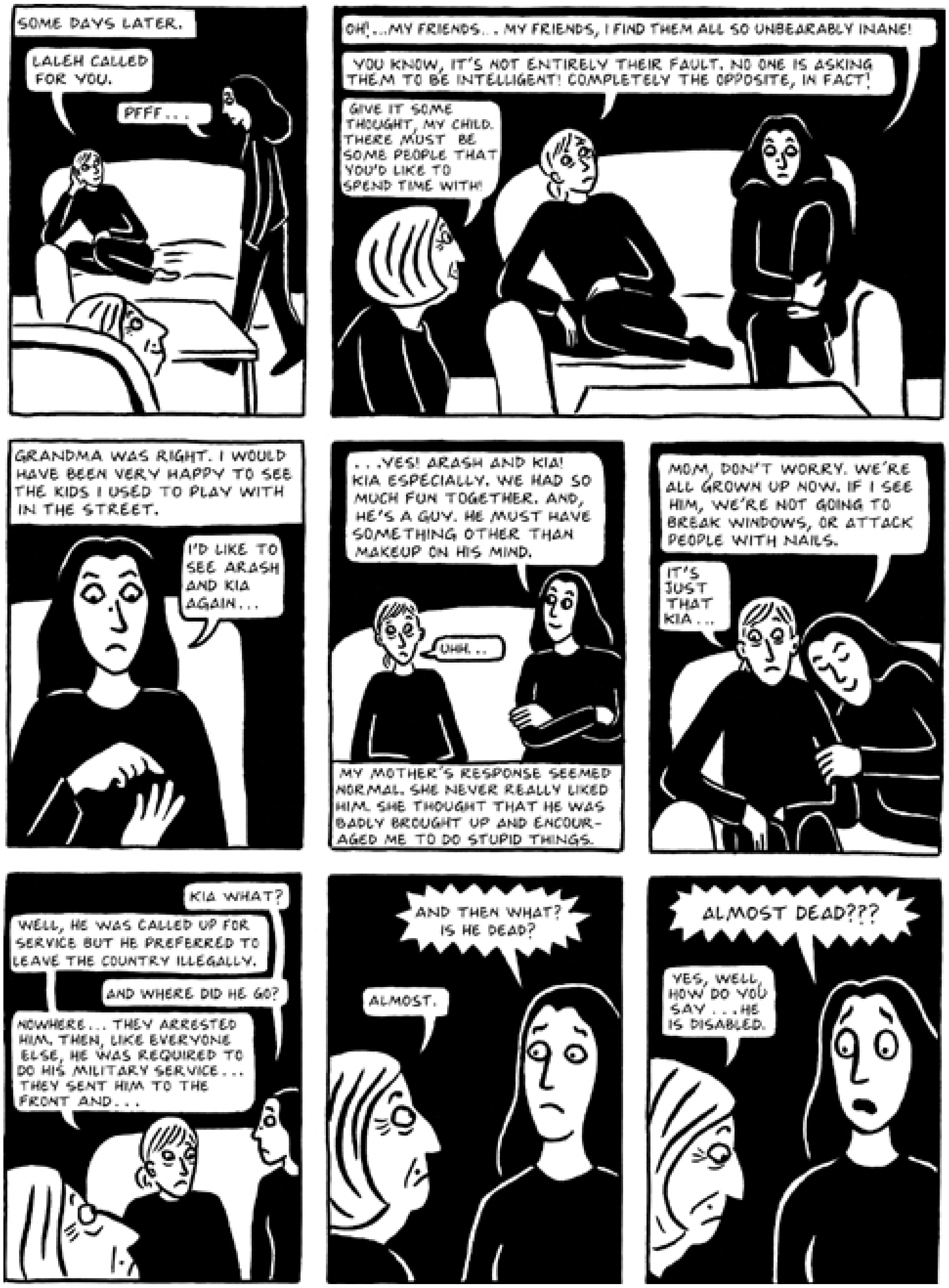
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE DONE, THE VISITS CONTINUED . . .

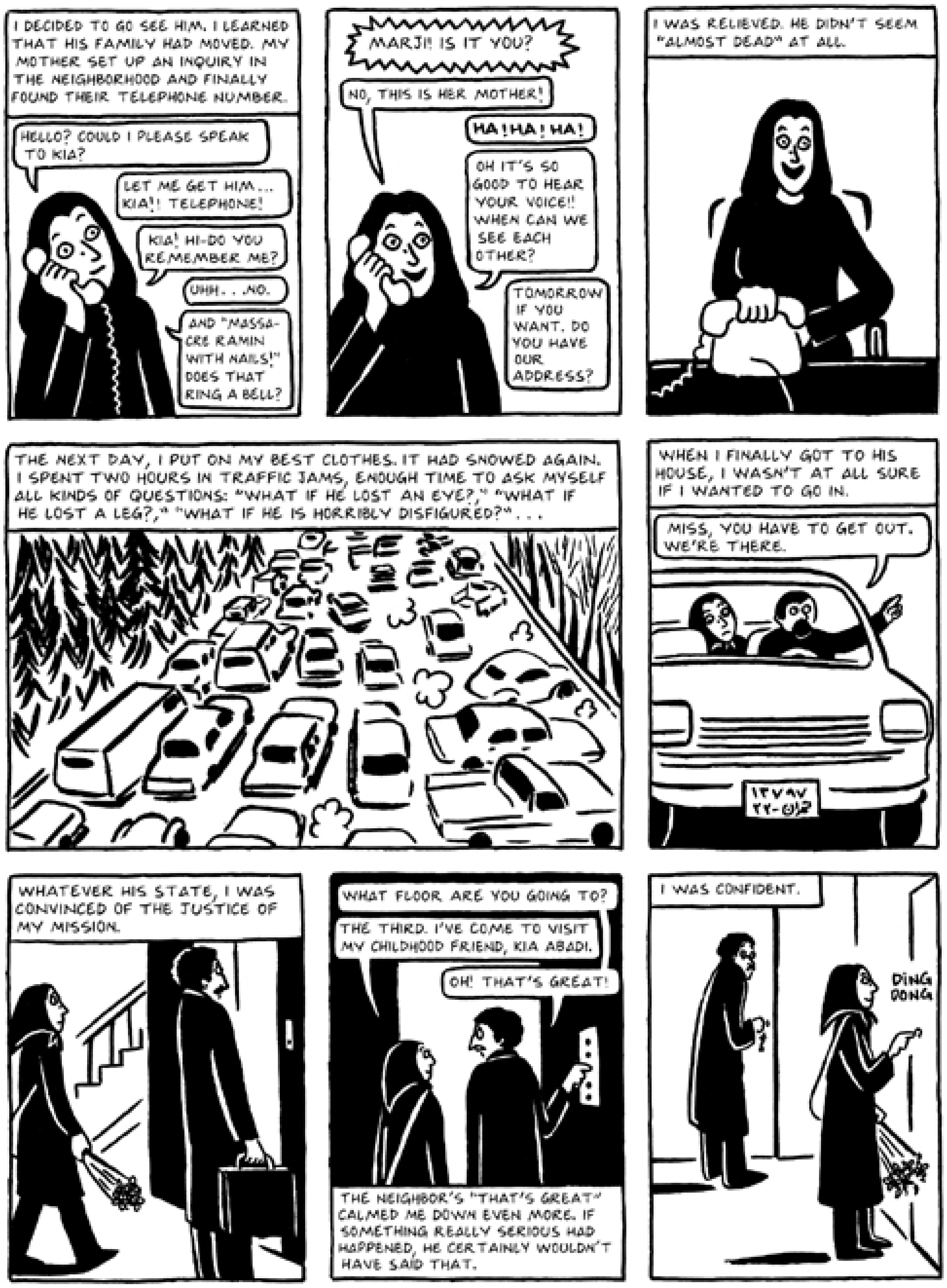
ASIDE FROM MY PARENTS, THE ONLY PERSON TO WHOM I REALLY WANTED TO TALK WAS MY GRANDMOTHER. BUT SHE CAME AFTER EVERYONE ELSE.

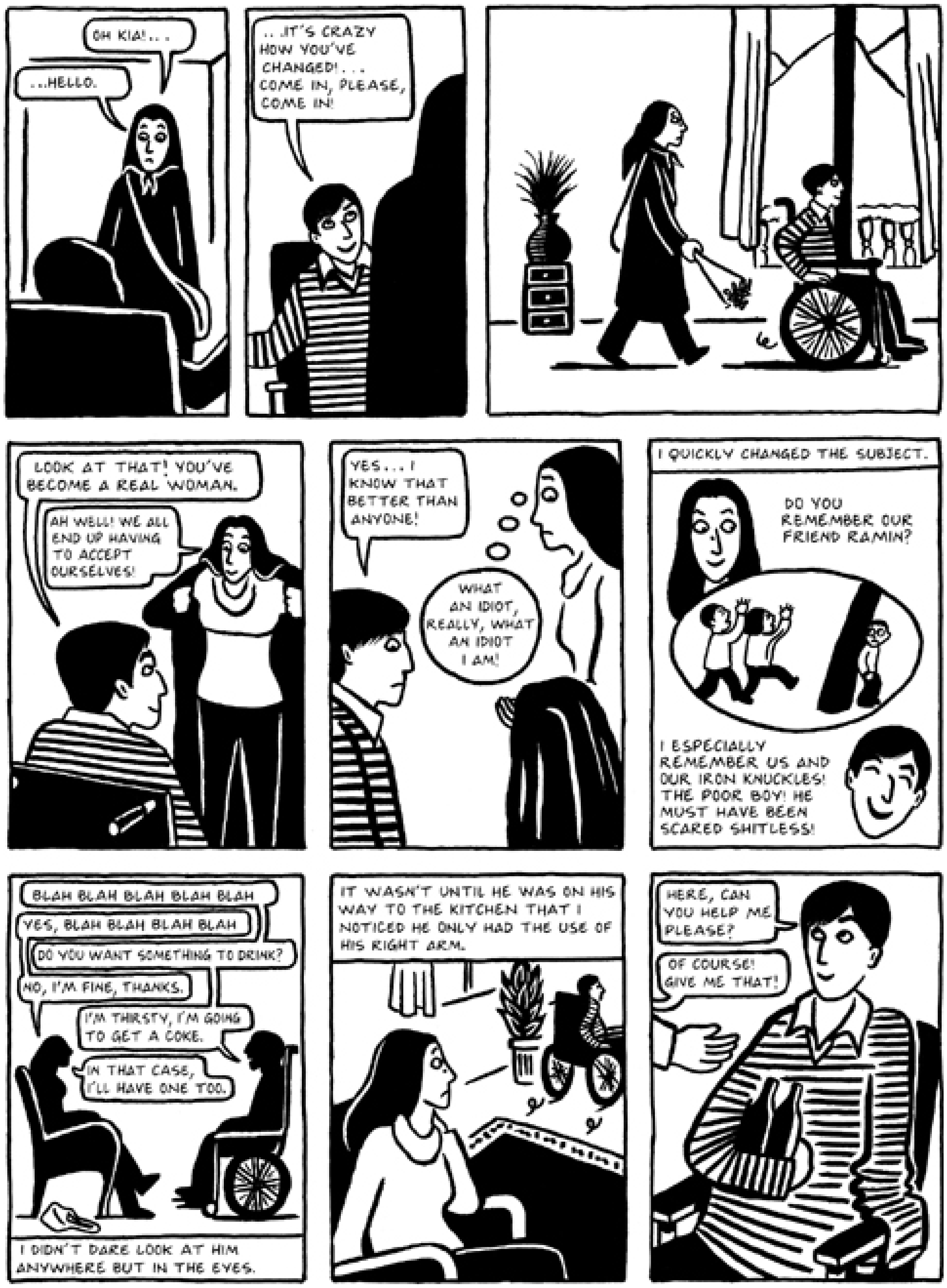

GRANDMA, WHERE WERE YOU?
I WAS WAITING FOR THE TRIBE TO GO FIRST! OH MY!! HOW YOU'VE GROWN. SOON YOU'LL BE CATCHING THE LORD'S BALLS.

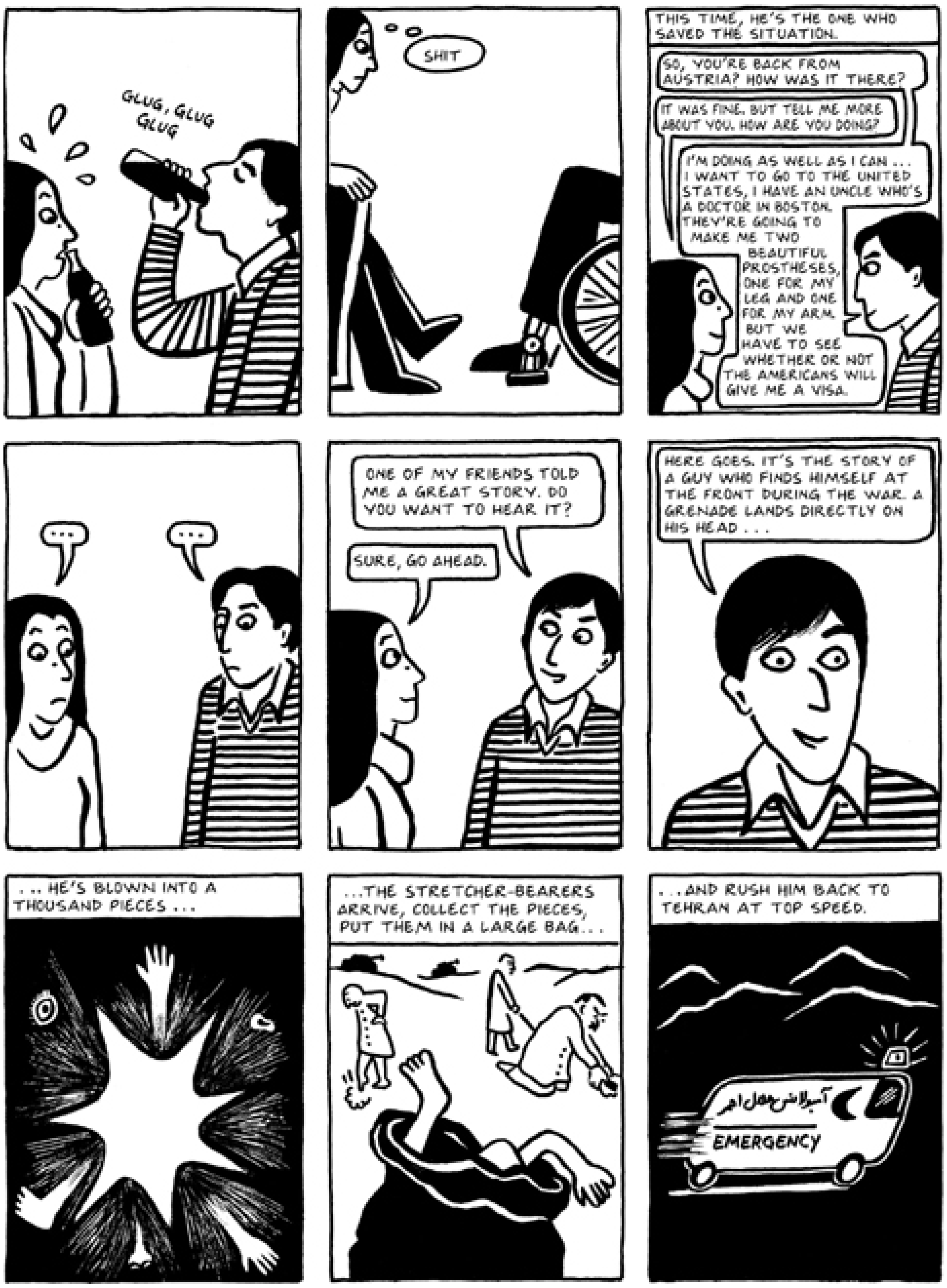
SHE WAS STILL HER OLD SELF.

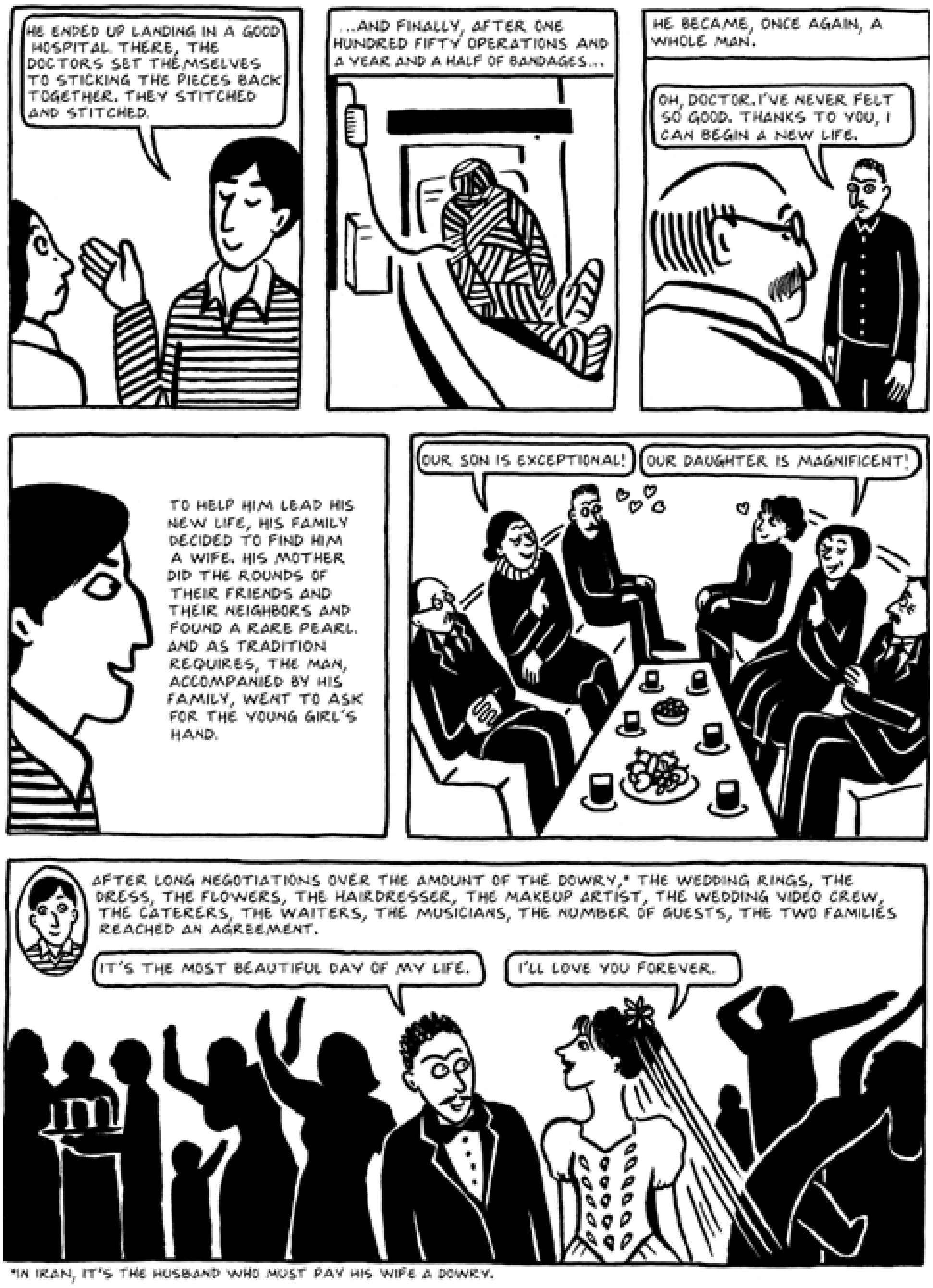

AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.
HI!
HOW ARE YOU?
UHHH . . .
I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.
WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A NUN? NO ONE WOULD EVER GUESS THAT YOU'D LIVED IN EUROPE.
OH, REALLY?
COMPARED TO HER FASHIONABLE MAKEUP, I REALLY DID EXUDE ALL THE ALLURE OF A NUN.
COME ON, TALK TO US! YOU MUST HAVE A MILLION THINGS TO TELL US ABOUT.
I DON'T KNOW . . .
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHAT THE NIGHTCLUBS IN VIENNA WERE LIKE?
IT'S JUST THAT . . . I DIDN'T GO THAT OFTEN . . . I DON'T REALLY LIKE THEM MUCH.
WHAT?
OH STOP PRETENDING TO BE SO SHOCKED! DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE WAS? ALWAYS GIVING LESSONS!! SHE'S A "REBEL," THIS ONE!
IF THERE WERE STILL NIGHTCLUBS IN TEHRAN, I'D BE THERE EVERY NIGHT!
HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE! ME TOO!
I HAD A HARD TIME REMEMBERING WHAT HAD BROUGHT US TOGETHER BEFORE.
A PART OF ME UNDERSTOOD THEM. WHEN SOMETHING IS FORBIDDEN, IT TAKES ON A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPORTANCE. MUCH LATER, I LEARNED THAT MAKING THEMSELVES UP AND WANTING TO FOLLOW WESTERN WAYS WAS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE ON THEIR PART.
NEVERTHELESS, I FELT TERRIBLY ALONE.


SOME DAYS LATER.
LALEH CALLED FOR YOU.
PFFF...
OH!...MY FRIENDS... MY FRIENDS, I FIND THEM ALL SO UNBEARABLY INANE!
YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT. NO ONE IS ASKING THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT! COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT!
GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT, MY CHILD. THERE MUST BE SOME PEOPLE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH!
GRANDMA WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE KIDS I USED TO PLAY WITH IN THE STREET.
I'D LIKE TO SEE ARASH AND KIA AGAIN...
...YES! ARASH AND KIA! KIA ESPECIALLY. WE HAD SO MUCH FUN TOGETHER. AND, HE'S A GUY. HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN MAKEUP ON HIS MIND.
UHH...
MY MOTHER'S RESPONSE SEEMED NORMAL. SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED HIM. SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BADLY BROUGHT UP AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DO STUPID THINGS.
MOM, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW. IF I SEE HIM, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK WINDOWS, OR ATTACK PEOPLE WITH NAILS.
IT'S JUST THAT KIA...
KIA WHAT?
WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY.
AND WHERE DID HE GO?
NOWHERE... THEY ARRESTED HIM. THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO DO HIS MILITARY SERVICE... THEY SENT HIM TO THE FRONT AND...
AND THEN WHAT? IS HE DEAD?
ALMOST.
ALMOST DEAD???
YES, WELL, HOW DO YOU SAY...HE IS DISABLED.

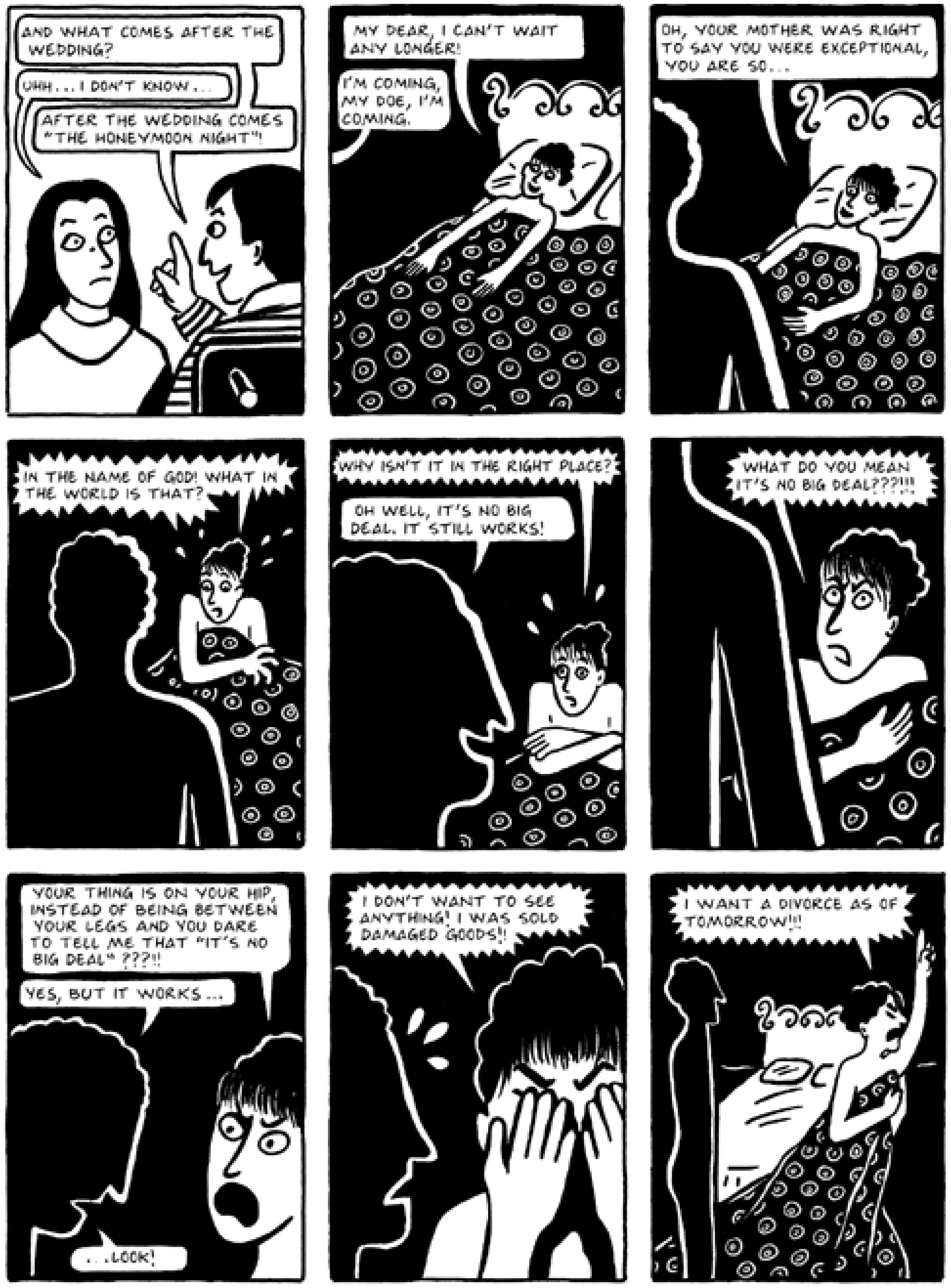

I DECIDED TO GO SEE HIM. I LEARNED THAT HIS FAMILY HAD MOVED. MY MOTHER SET UP AN INQUIRY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND FINALLY FOUND THEIR TELEPHONE NUMBER.
HELLO? COULD I PLEASE SPEAK TO KIA?
LET ME GET HIM... KIA!! TELEPHONE!
KIA! HI-DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
UHH. . .NO.
AND "MASSACRE RAMIN WITH NAILS!" DOES THAT RING A BELL?
MARJI!! IS IT YOU?
NO, THIS IS HER MOTHER!
HA! HA! HA!
OH IT'S SO GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!! WHEN CAN WE SEE EACH OTHER?
TOMORROW IF YOU WANT. DO YOU HAVE OUR ADDRESS?
I WAS RELIEVED. HE DIDN'T SEEM "ALMOST DEAD" AT ALL.
THE NEXT DAY, I PUT ON MY BEST CLOTHES. IT HAD SNOWED AGAIN. I SPENT TWO HOURS IN TRAFFIC JAMS, ENOUGH TIME TO ASK MYSELF ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS: "WHAT IF HE LOST AN EYE?," "WHAT IF HE LOST A LEG?," "WHAT IF HE IS HORRIBLY DISFIGURED?". . .
WHEN I FINALLY GOT TO HIS HOUSE, I WASN'T AT ALL SURE IF I WANTED TO GO IN.
MISS, YOU HAVE TO GET OUT. WE'RE THERE.
WHATEVER HIS STATE, I WAS CONVINCED OF THE JUSTICE OF MY MISSION.
WHAT FLOOR ARE YOU GOING TO?
THE THIRD. I'VE COME TO VISIT MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, KIA ABADI.
OH! THAT'S GREAT!
THE NEIGHBOR'S "THAT'S GREAT" CALMED ME DOWN EVEN MORE. IF SOMETHING REALLY SERIOUS HAD HAPPENED, HE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT.
I WAS CONFIDENT.
DING DONG

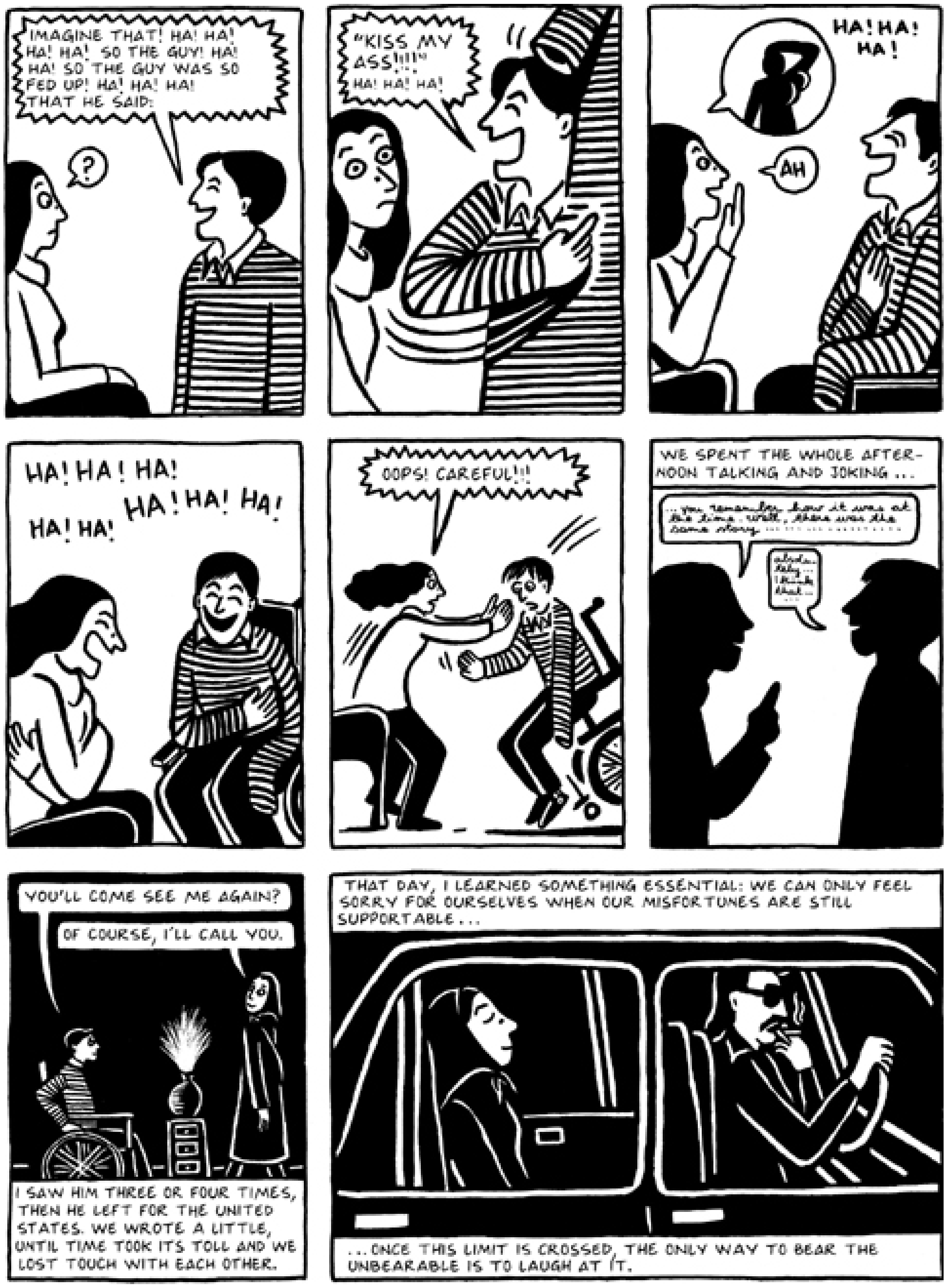

OH KIA!...
...HELLO.
...IT'S CRAZY HOW YOU'VE CHANGED!... COME IN, PLEASE, COME IN!
LOOK AT THAT! YOU'VE BECOME A REAL WOMAN.
AH WELL! WE ALL END UP HAVING TO ACCEPT OURSELVES!
YES... I KNOW THAT BETTER THAN ANYONE!
WHAT AN IDIOT, REALLY, WHAT AN IDIOT I AM!
I QUICKLY CHANGED THE SUBJECT.
DO YOU REMEMBER OUR FRIEND RAMIN?
I ESPECIALLY REMEMBER US AND OUR IRON KNUCKLES! THE POOR BOY! HE MUST HAVE BEEN SCARED SHITLESS!
BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
YES, BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
DO YOU WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK?
NO, I'M FINE, THANKS.
I'M THIRSTY, I'M GOING TO GET A COKE.
IN THAT CASE, I'LL HAVE ONE TOO.
I DIDN'T DARE LOOK AT HIM ANYWHERE BUT IN THE EYES.
IT WASN'T UNTIL HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE KITCHEN THAT I NOTICED HE ONLY HAD THE USE OF HIS RIGHT ARM.
HERE, CAN YOU HELP ME, PLEASE?
OF COURSE! GIVE ME THAT!


GLUG, GLUG
GLUG
SHIT
THIS TIME, HE'S THE ONE WHO SAVED THE SITUATION.
SO, YOU'RE BACK FROM AUSTRIA? HOW WAS IT THERE?
IT WAS FINE. BUT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOU. HOW ARE YOU DOING?
I'M DOING AS WELL AS I CAN ... I WANT TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES, I HAVE AN UNCLE WHO'S A DOCTOR IN BOSTON. THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE ME TWO BEAUTIFUL PROSTHESES, ONE FOR MY LEG AND ONE FOR MY ARM. BUT WE HAVE TO SEE WHETHER OR NOT THE AMERICANS WILL GIVE ME A VISA.
...
...
ONE OF MY FRIENDS TOLD ME A GREAT STORY. DO YOU WANT TO HEAR IT?
SURE, GO AHEAD.
HERE GOES. IT'S THE STORY OF A GUY WHO FINDS HIMSELF AT THE FRONT DURING THE WAR. A GRENADE LANDS DIRECTLY ON HIS HEAD ...
... HE'S BLOWN INTO A THOUSAND PIECES ...
...THE STRETCHER-BEARERS ARRIVE, COLLECT THE PIECES, PUT THEM IN A LARGE BAG...
...AND RUSH HIM BACK TO TEHRAN AT TOP SPEED.
آمبولانس هلال احمر
EMERGENCY

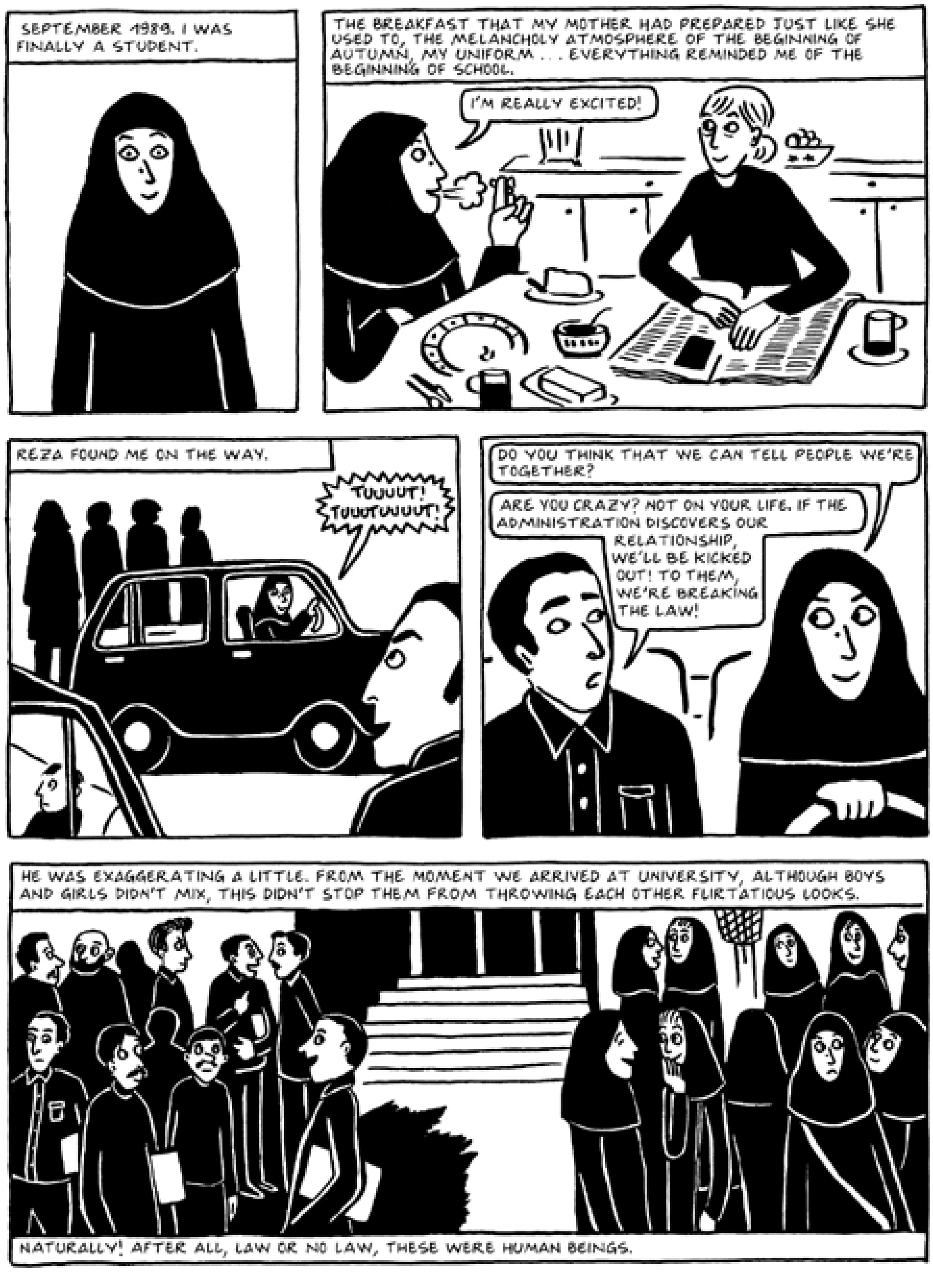

HE ENDED UP LANDING IN A GOOD HOSPITAL THERE, THE DOCTORS SET THEMSELVES TO STICKING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER. THEY STITCHED AND STITCHED.
...AND FINALLY, AFTER ONE HUNDRED FIFTY OPERATIONS AND A YEAR AND A HALF OF BANDAGES...
HE BECAME, ONCE AGAIN, A WHOLE MAN.
OH, DOCTOR. I'VE NEVER FELT SO GOOD. THANKS TO YOU, I CAN BEGIN A NEW LIFE.
TO HELP HIM LEAD HIS NEW LIFE, HIS FAMILY DECIDED TO FIND HIM A WIFE. HIS MOTHER DID THE ROUNDS OF THEIR FRIENDS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS AND FOUND A RARE PEARL. AND AS TRADITION REQUIRES, THE MAN, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS FAMILY, WENT TO ASK FOR THE YOUNG GIRL'S HAND.
OUR SON IS EXCEPTIONAL!
OUR DAUGHTER IS MAGNIFICENT!
AFTER LONG NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE AMOUNT OF THE DOWRY,* THE WEDDING RINGS, THE DRESS, THE FLOWERS, THE HAIRDRESSER, THE MAKEUP ARTIST, THE WEDDING VIDEO CREW, THE CATERERS, THE WAITERS, THE MUSICIANS, THE NUMBER OF GUESTS, THE TWO FAMILIES REACHED AN AGREEMENT.
IT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DAY OF MY LIFE.
I'LL LOVE YOU FOREVER.

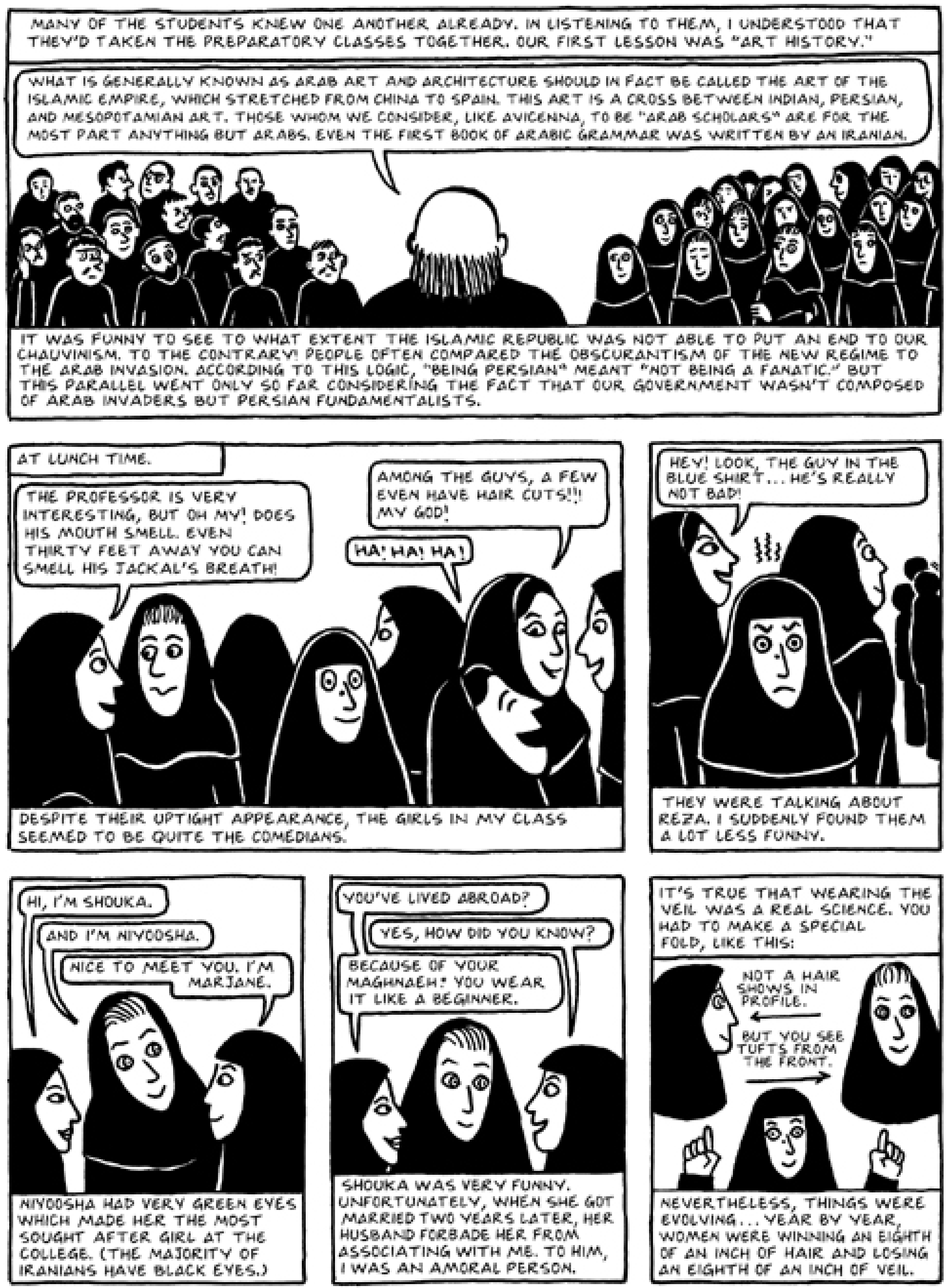
*IN IRAN, IT'S THE HUSBAND WHO MUST PAY HIS WIFE A DOWRY.

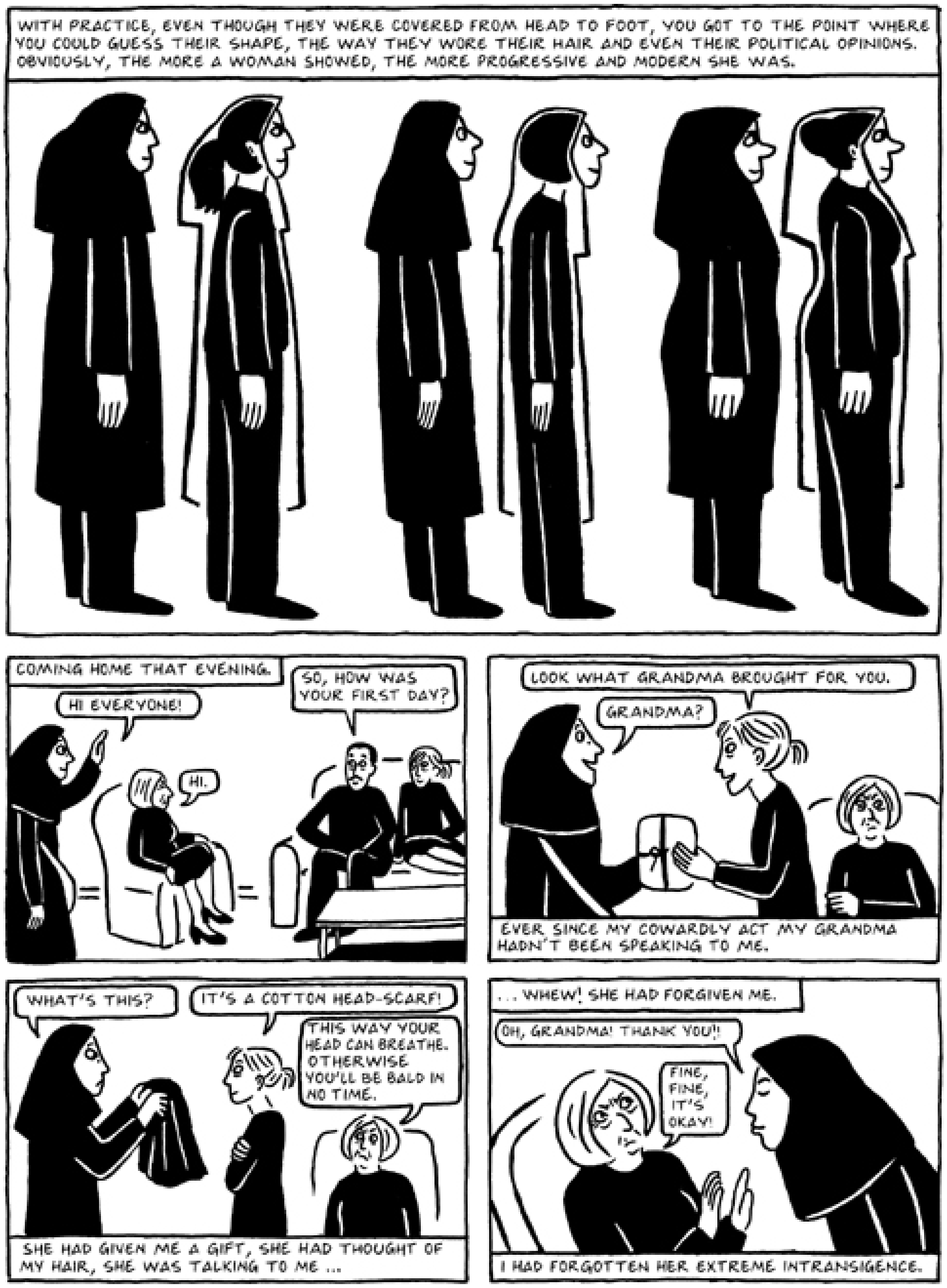

AND WHAT COMES AFTER THE WEDDING?
UHH... I DON'T KNOW...
AFTER THE WEDDING COMES "THE HONEYMOON NIGHT"!
MY DEAR, I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER!
I'M COMING, MY DOE, I'M COMING.
OH, YOUR MOTHER WAS RIGHT TO SAY YOU WERE EXCEPTIONAL, YOU ARE SO...
IN THE NAME OF GOD! WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT?
WHY ISN'T IT IN THE RIGHT PLACE?
OH WELL, IT'S NO BIG DEAL. IT STILL WORKS!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S NO BIG DEAL???!!!
YOUR THING IS ON YOUR HIP, INSTEAD OF BEING BETWEEN YOUR LEGS AND YOU DARE TO TELL ME THAT "IT'S NO BIG DEAL" ???!!
YES, BUT IT WORKS...
...LOOK!
I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING! I WAS SOLD DAMAGED GOODS!!
I WANT A DIVORCE AS OF TOMORROW!!

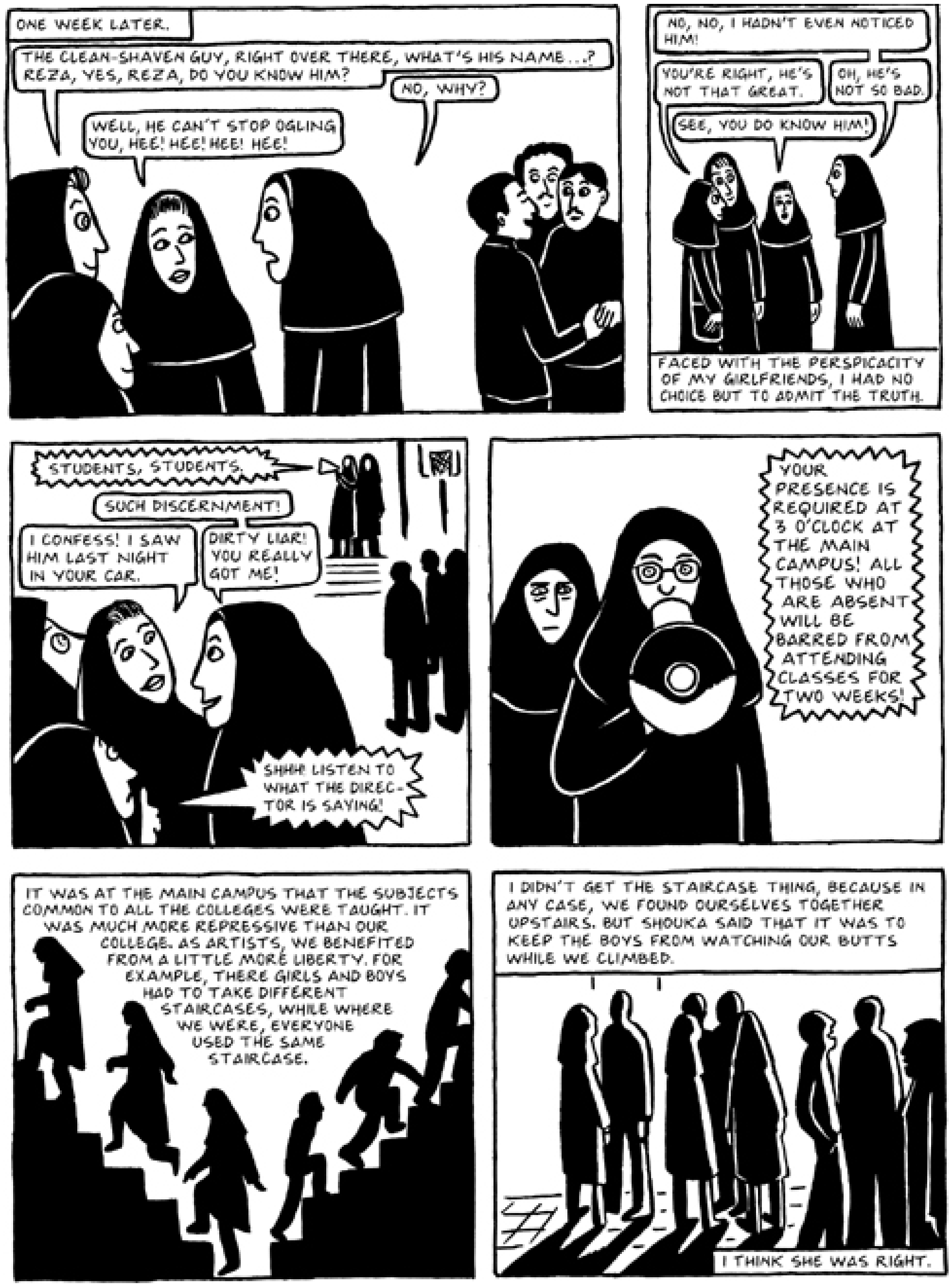

IMAGINE THAT! HA! HA! HA! HA! SO THE GUY! HA! HA! SO THE GUY WAS SO FED UP! HA! HA! HA! THAT HE SAID:
?
"KISS MY ASS!!!!" HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA!
AH
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
OOPS! CAREFUL!!!
WE SPENT THE WHOLE AFTERNOON TALKING AND JOKING...
... you remember how it was at the time... well, there was the same story...
about... baby... I think that...
YOU'LL COME SEE ME AGAIN?
OF COURSE, I'LL CALL YOU.
I SAW HIM THREE OR FOUR TIMES, THEN HE LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES. WE WROTE A LITTLE, UNTIL TIME TOOK ITS TOLL AND WE LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER.
THAT DAY, I LEARNED SOMETHING ESSENTIAL: WE CAN ONLY FEEL SORRY FOR OURSELVES WHEN OUR MISFORTUNES ARE STILL SUPPORTABLE...
...ONCE THIS LIMIT IS CROSSED, THE ONLY WAY TO BEAR THE UNBEARABLE IS TO LAUGH AT IT.

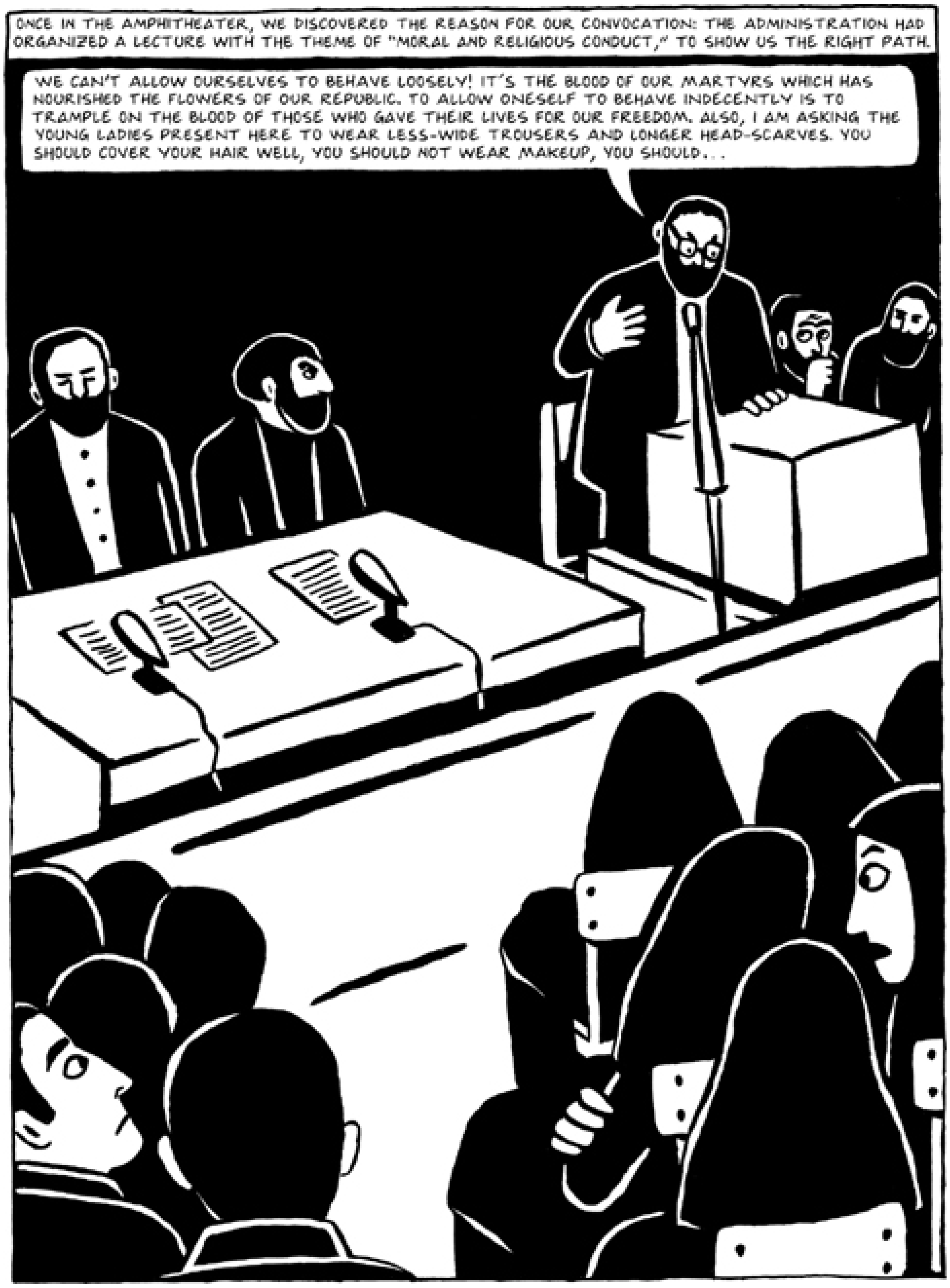
# THE CONVOCATION

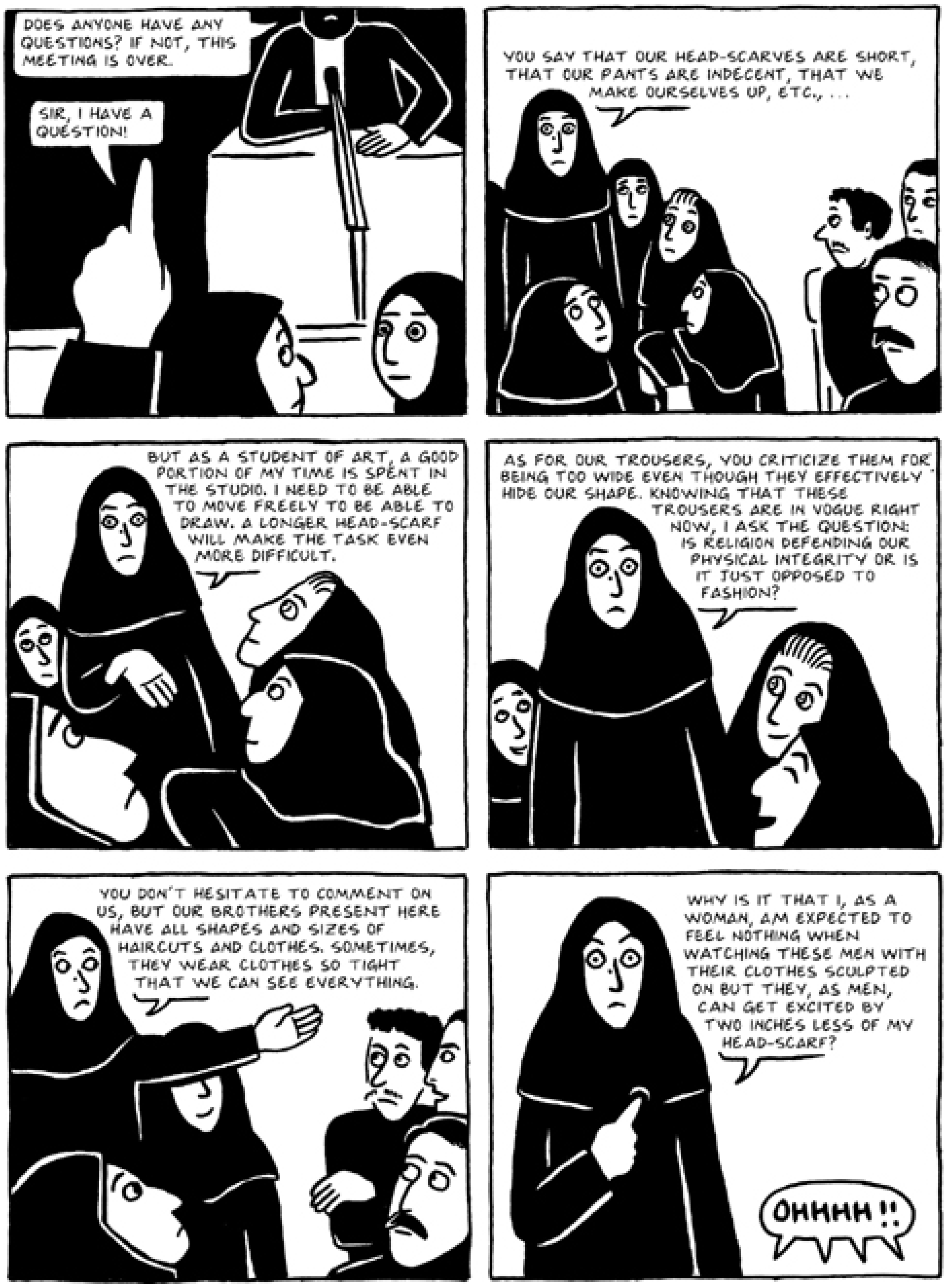

SEPTEMBER 1989. I WAS FINALLY A STUDENT.
THE BREAKFAST THAT MY MOTHER HAD PREPARED JUST LIKE SHE USED TO, THE MELANCHOLY ATMOSPHERE OF THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN, MY UNIFORM . . . EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF THE BEGINNING OF SCHOOL.
I'M REALLY EXCITED!
REZA FOUND ME ON THE WAY.
TUUUUT! TUUUTUUUUT!
DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN TELL PEOPLE WE'RE TOGETHER?
ARE YOU CRAZY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE. IF THE ADMINISTRATION DISCOVERS OUR RELATIONSHIP, WE'LL BE KICKED OUT! TO THEM, WE'RE BREAKING THE LAW!
HE WAS EXAGGERATING A LITTLE. FROM THE MOMENT WE ARRIVED AT UNIVERSITY, ALTHOUGH BOYS AND GIRLS DIDN'T MIX, THIS DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM THROWING EACH OTHER FLIRTATIOUS LOOKS.
NATURALLY! AFTER ALL, LAW OR NO LAW, THESE WERE HUMAN BEINGS.

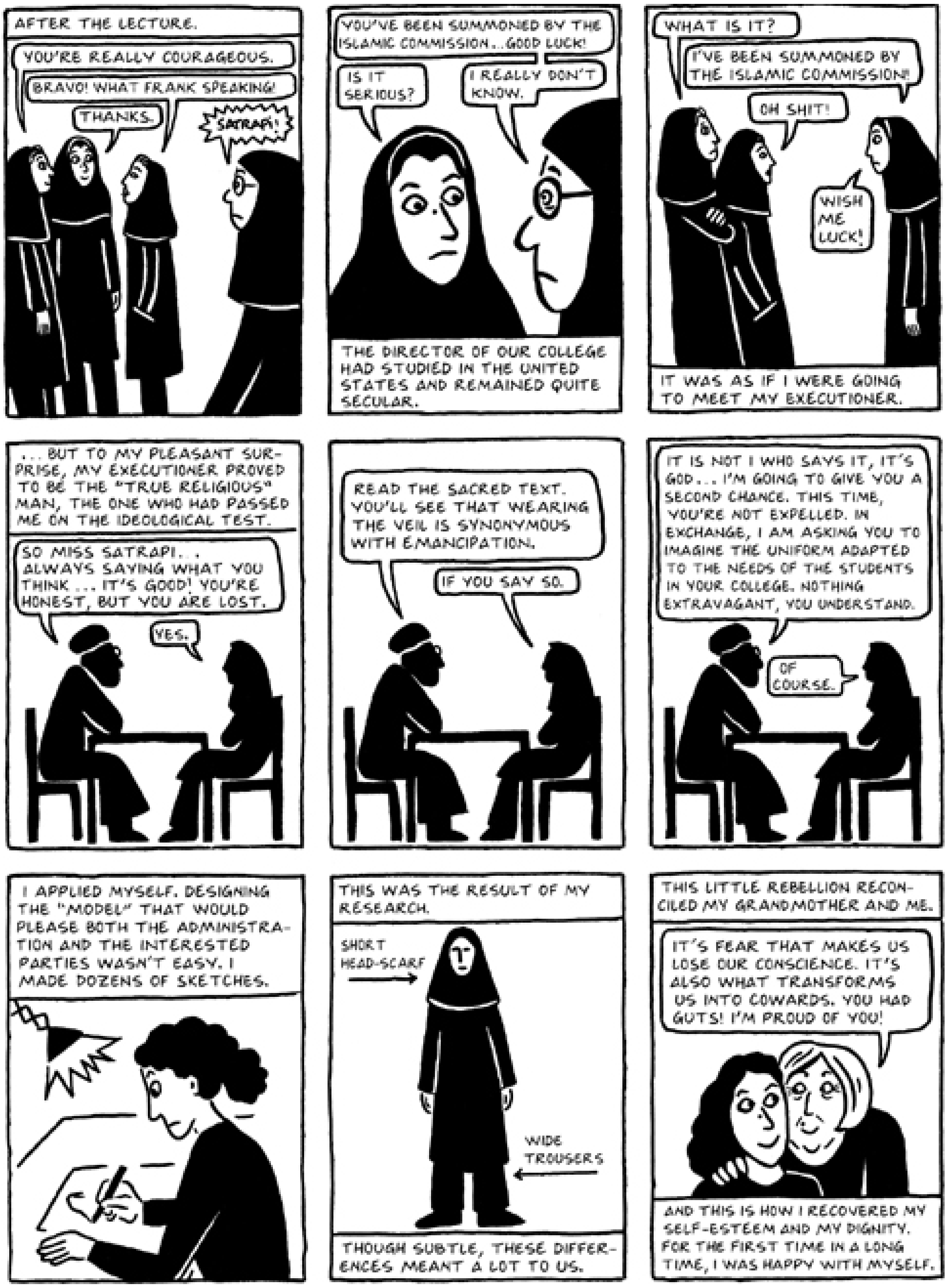

MANY OF THE STUDENTS KNEW ONE ANOTHER ALREADY. IN LISTENING TO THEM, I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY'D TAKEN THE PREPARATORY CLASSES TOGETHER. OUR FIRST LESSON WAS "ART HISTORY."
WHAT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AS ARAB ART AND ARCHITECTURE SHOULD IN FACT BE CALLED THE ART OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE, WHICH STRETCHED FROM CHINA TO SPAIN. THIS ART IS A CROSS BETWEEN INDIAN, PERSIAN, AND MESOPOTAMIAN ART. THOSE WHOM WE CONSIDER, LIKE AVICENNA, TO BE "ARAB SCHOLARS" ARE FOR THE MOST PART ANYTHING BUT ARABS. EVEN THE FIRST BOOK OF ARABIC GRAMMAR WAS WRITTEN BY AN IRANIAN.
IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS NOT ABLE TO PUT AN END TO OUR CHAUVINISM. TO THE CONTRARY! PEOPLE OFTEN COMPARED THE OBSCURANTISM OF THE NEW REGIME TO THE ARAB INVASION. ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, "BEING PERSIAN" MEANT "NOT BEING A FANATIC." BUT THIS PARALLEL WENT ONLY SO FAR CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WASN'T COMPOSED OF ARAB INVADERS BUT PERSIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS.
AT LUNCH TIME.
THE PROFESSOR IS VERY INTERESTING, BUT OH MY! DOES HIS MOUTH SMELL. EVEN THIRTY FEET AWAY YOU CAN SMELL HIS JACKAL'S BREATH!
AMONG THE GUYS, A FEW EVEN HAVE HAIR CUTS!!! MY GOD!
HA! HA! HA!
DESPITE THEIR UPTIGHT APPEARANCE, THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS SEEMED TO BE QUITE THE COMEDIANS.
HEY! LOOK, THE GUY IN THE BLUE SHIRT... HE'S REALLY NOT BAD!
THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT REZA. I SUDDENLY FOUND THEM A LOT LESS FUNNY.
HI, I'M SHOUKA.
AND I'M NIYOOSHA.
NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M MARJANE.
NIYOOSHA HAD VERY GREEN EYES WHICH MADE HER THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER GIRL AT THE COLLEGE. (THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS HAVE BLACK EYES.)
YOU'VE LIVED ABROAD?
YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?
BECAUSE OF YOUR MAGHNAEH! YOU WEAR IT LIKE A BEGINNER.
SHOUKA WAS VERY FUNNY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED TWO YEARS LATER, HER HUSBAND FORBADE HER FROM ASSOCIATING WITH ME. TO HIM, I WAS AN AMORAL PERSON.
IT'S TRUE THAT WEARING THE VEIL WAS A REAL SCIENCE. YOU HAD TO MAKE A SPECIAL FOLD, LIKE THIS:
NOT A HAIR SHOWS IN PROFILE.
BUT YOU SEE TUFTS FROM THE FRONT.
NEVERTHELESS, THINGS WERE EVOLVING... YEAR BY YEAR, WOMEN WERE WINNING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF HAIR AND LOSING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF VEIL.


WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GOT TO THE POINT WHERE YOU COULD GUESS THEIR SHAPE, THE WAY THEY WORE THEIR HAIR AND EVEN THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE MORE A WOMAN SHOWED, THE MORE PROGRESSIVE AND MODERN SHE WAS.
COMING HOME THAT EVENING.
HI EVERYONE!
HI.
SO, HOW WAS YOUR FIRST DAY?
LOOK WHAT GRANDMA BROUGHT FOR YOU.
GRANDMA?
EVER SINCE MY COWARDLY ACT MY GRANDMA HADN'T BEEN SPEAKING TO ME.
WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S A COTTON HEAD-SCARF!
THIS WAY YOUR HEAD CAN BREATHE. OTHERWISE YOU'LL BE BALD IN NO TIME.
SHE HAD GIVEN ME A GIFT, SHE HAD THOUGHT OF MY HAIR, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME ...
... WHEW! SHE HAD FORGIVEN ME.
OH, GRANDMA! THANK YOU!!
FINE, FINE, IT'S OKAY!
I HAD FORGOTTEN HER EXTREME INTRANSIGENCE.

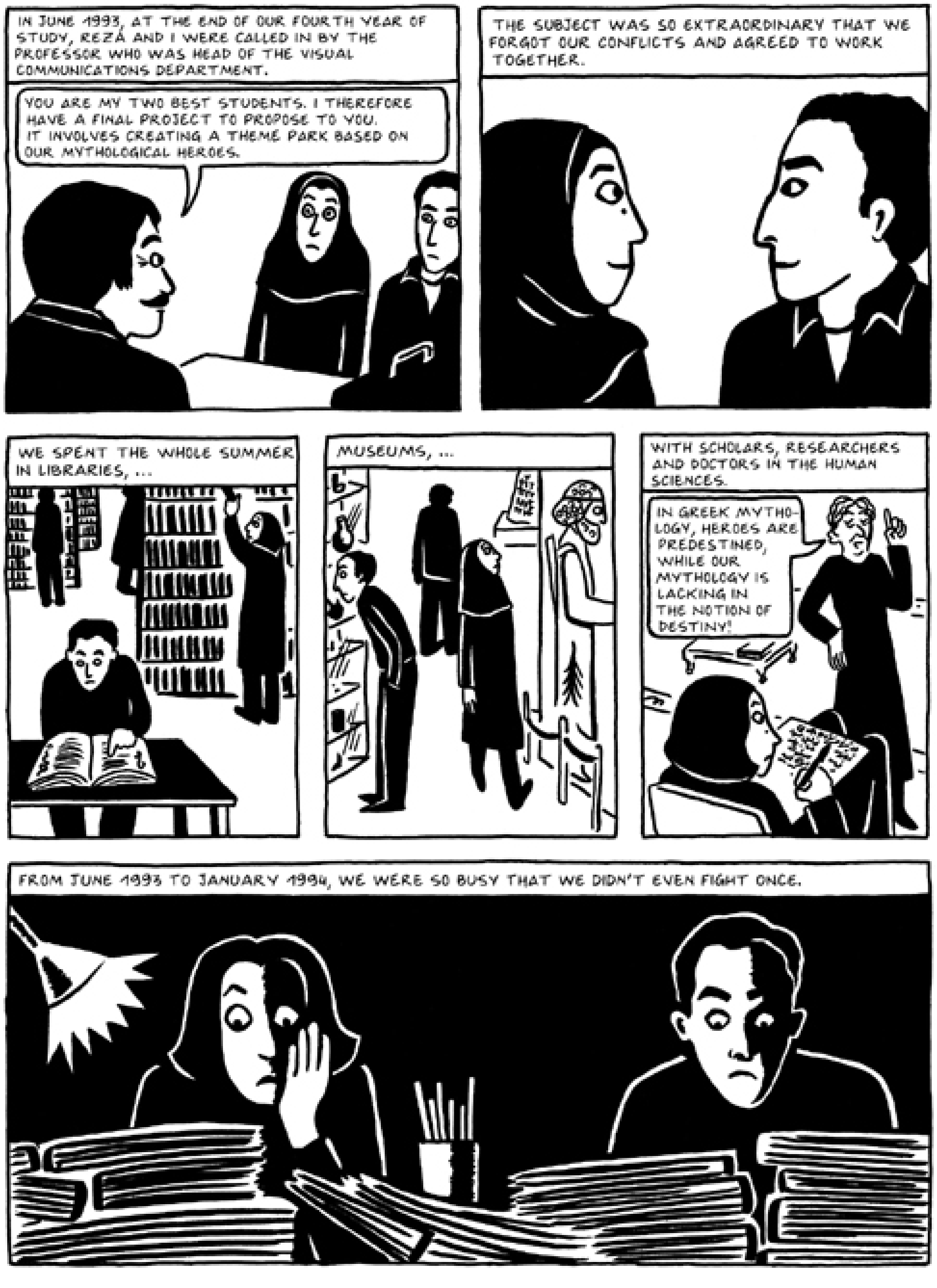

ONE WEEK LATER.
THE CLEAN-SHAVEN GUY, RIGHT OVER THERE, WHAT'S HIS NAME...? REZA, YES, REZA, DO YOU KNOW HIM?
NO, WHY?
WELL, HE CAN'T STOP OGLING YOU, HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE!
NO, NO, I HADN'T EVEN NOTICED HIM!
YOU'RE RIGHT, HE'S NOT THAT GREAT.
OH, HE'S NOT SO BAD.
SEE, YOU DO KNOW HIM!
FACED WITH THE PERSPICACITY OF MY GIRLFRIENDS, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ADMIT THE TRUTH.
STUDENTS, STUDENTS.
SUCH DISCERNMENT!
I CONFESS! I SAW HIM LAST NIGHT IN YOUR CAR.
DIRTY LIAR! YOU REALLY GOT ME!
SHHH! LISTEN TO WHAT THE DIRECTOR IS SAYING!
YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED AT 3 O'CLOCK AT THE MAIN CAMPUS! ALL THOSE WHO ARE ABSENT WILL BE BARRED FROM ATTENDING CLASSES FOR TWO WEEKS!
IT WAS AT THE MAIN CAMPUS THAT THE SUBJECTS COMMON TO ALL THE COLLEGES WERE TAUGHT. IT WAS MUCH MORE REPRESSIVE THAN OUR COLLEGE. AS ARTISTS, WE BENEFITED FROM A LITTLE MORE LIBERTY. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE GIRLS AND BOYS HAD TO TAKE DIFFERENT STAIRCASES, WHILE WHERE WE WERE, EVERYONE USED THE SAME STAIRCASE.
I DIDN'T GET THE STAIRCASE THING, BECAUSE IN ANY CASE, WE FOUND OURSELVES TOGETHER UPSTAIRS. BUT SHOUKA SAID THAT IT WAS TO KEEP THE BOYS FROM WATCHING OUR BUTTS WHILE WE CLIMBED.
I THINK SHE WAS RIGHT.


ONCE IN THE AMPHITHEATER, WE DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR OUR CONVOCATION: THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ORGANIZED A LECTURE WITH THE THEME OF "MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDUCT," TO SHOW US THE RIGHT PATH.
WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BEHAVE LOOSELY! IT'S THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS WHICH HAS NOURISHED THE FLOWERS OF OUR REPUBLIC. TO ALLOW ONESELF TO BEHAVE INDECENTLY IS TO TRAMPLE ON THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALSO, I AM ASKING THE YOUNG LADIES PRESENT HERE TO WEAR LESS-WIDE TROUSERS AND LONGER HEAD-SCARVES. YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR HAIR WELL, YOU SHOULD NOT WEAR MAKEUP, YOU SHOULD...

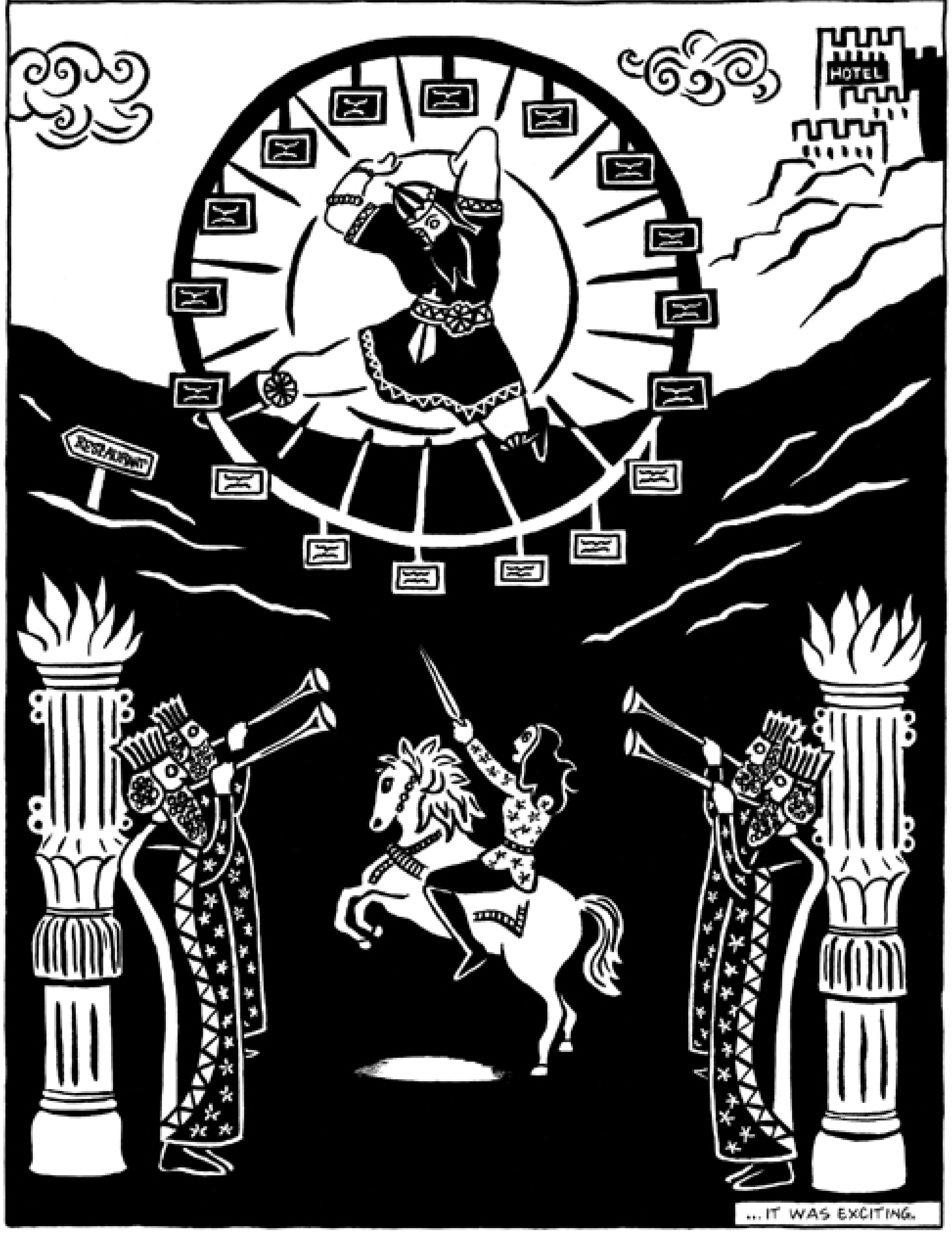

DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? IF NOT, THIS MEETING IS OVER.
SIR, I HAVE A QUESTION!
YOU SAY THAT OUR HEAD-SCARVES ARE SHORT, THAT OUR PANTS ARE INDECENT, THAT WE MAKE OURSELVES UP, ETC., ...
BUT AS A STUDENT OF ART, A GOOD PORTION OF MY TIME IS SPENT IN THE STUDIO. I NEED TO BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY TO BE ABLE TO DRAW. A LONGER HEAD-SCARF WILL MAKE THE TASK EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.
AS FOR OUR TROUSERS, YOU CRITICIZE THEM FOR BEING TOO WIDE EVEN THOUGH THEY EFFECTIVELY HIDE OUR SHAPE. KNOWING THAT THESE TROUSERS ARE IN VOGUE RIGHT NOW, I ASK THE QUESTION: IS RELIGION DEFENDING OUR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OR IS IT JUST OPPOSED TO FASHION?
YOU DON'T HESITATE TO COMMENT ON US, BUT OUR BROTHERS PRESENT HERE HAVE ALL SHAPES AND SIZES OF HAIRCUTS AND CLOTHES. SOMETIMES, THEY WEAR CLOTHES SO TIGHT THAT WE CAN SEE EVERYTHING.
WHY IS IT THAT I, AS A WOMAN, AM EXPECTED TO FEEL NOTHING WHEN WATCHING THESE MEN WITH THEIR CLOTHES SCULPTED ON BUT THEY, AS MEN, CAN GET EXCITED BY TWO INCHES LESS OF MY HEAD-SCARF?
OHHHH!!


AFTER THE LECTURE.
YOU'RE REALLY COURAGEOUS.
BRAVO! WHAT FRANK SPEAKING!
THANKS.
SATRAPI!
YOU'VE BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ISLAMIC COMMISSION...GOOD LUCK!
IS IT SERIOUS?
I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
THE DIRECTOR OF OUR COLLEGE HAD STUDIED IN THE UNITED STATES AND REMAINED QUITE SECULAR.
WHAT IS IT?
I'VE BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ISLAMIC COMMISSION!
OH SHIT!
WISH ME LUCK!
IT WAS AS IF I WERE GOING TO MEET MY EXECUTIONER.
... BUT TO MY PLEASANT SURPRISE, MY EXECUTIONER PROVED TO BE THE "TRUE RELIGIOUS" MAN, THE ONE WHO HAD PASSED ME ON THE IDEOLOGICAL TEST.
SO MISS SATRAPI. . . ALWAYS SAYING WHAT YOU THINK ... IT'S GOOD! YOU'RE HONEST, BUT YOU ARE LOST.
YES.
READ THE SACRED TEXT. YOU'LL SEE THAT WEARING THE VEIL IS SYNONYMOUS WITH EMANCIPATION.
IF YOU SAY SO.
IT IS NOT I WHO SAYS IT, IT'S GOD... I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A SECOND CHANCE. THIS TIME, YOU'RE NOT EXPELLED. IN EXCHANGE, I AM ASKING YOU TO IMAGINE THE UNIFORM ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS IN YOUR COLLEGE. NOTHING EXTRAVAGANT, YOU UNDERSTAND.
OF COURSE.
I APPLIED MYSELF. DESIGNING THE "MODEL" THAT WOULD PLEASE BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE INTERESTED PARTIES WASN'T EASY. I MADE DOZENS OF SKETCHES.
THIS WAS THE RESULT OF MY RESEARCH.
SHORT HEAD-SCARF
WIDE TROUSERS
THOUGH SUBTLE, THESE DIFFERENCES MEANT A LOT TO US.
THIS LITTLE REBELLION RECONCILED MY GRANDMOTHER AND ME.
IT'S FEAR THAT MAKES US LOSE OUR CONSCIENCE. IT'S ALSO WHAT TRANSFORMS US INTO COWARDS. YOU HAD GUTS! I'M PROUD OF YOU!
AND THIS IS HOW I RECOVERED MY SELF-ESTEEM AND MY DIGNITY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I WAS HAPPY WITH MYSELF.

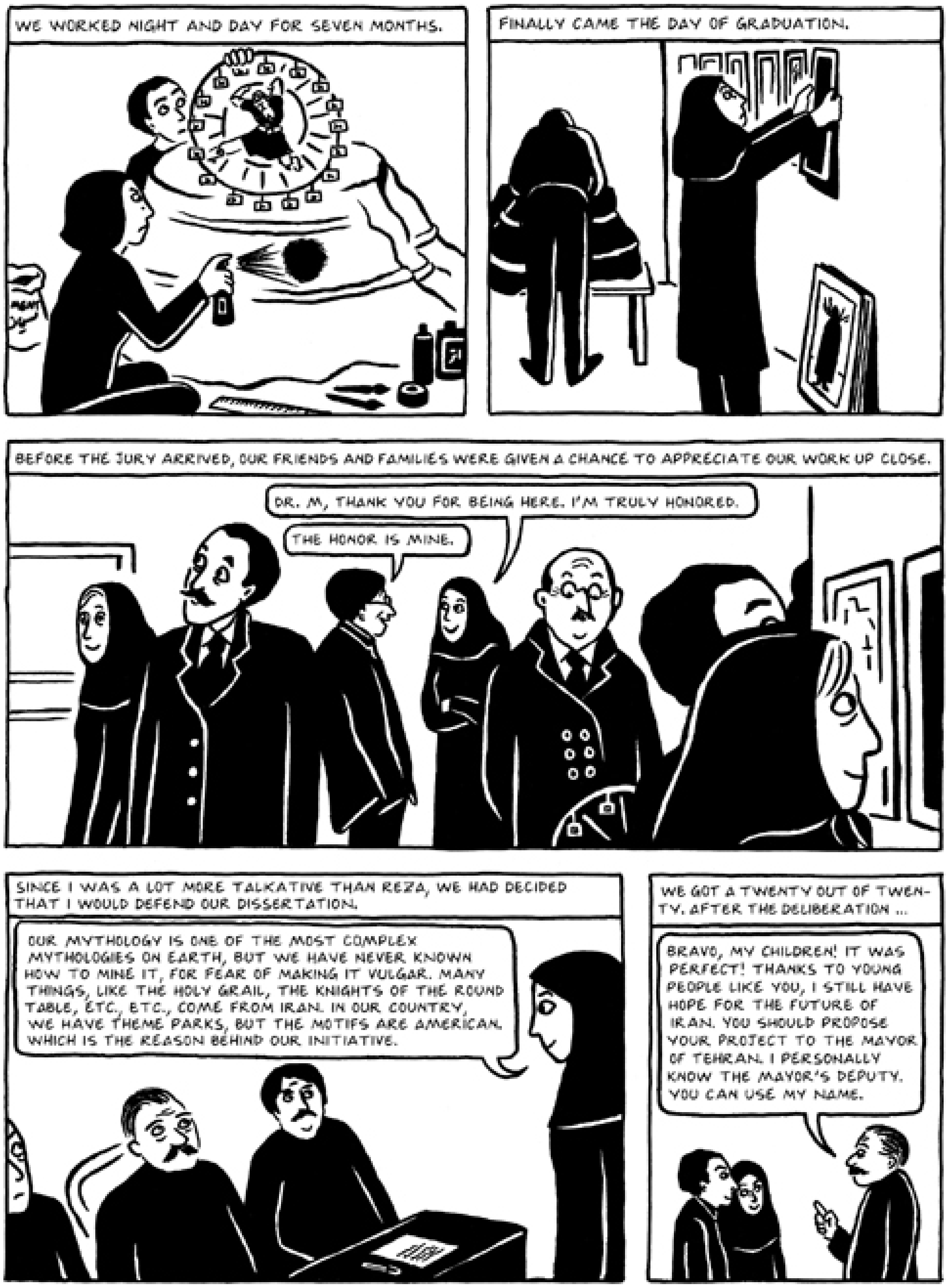
# THE END

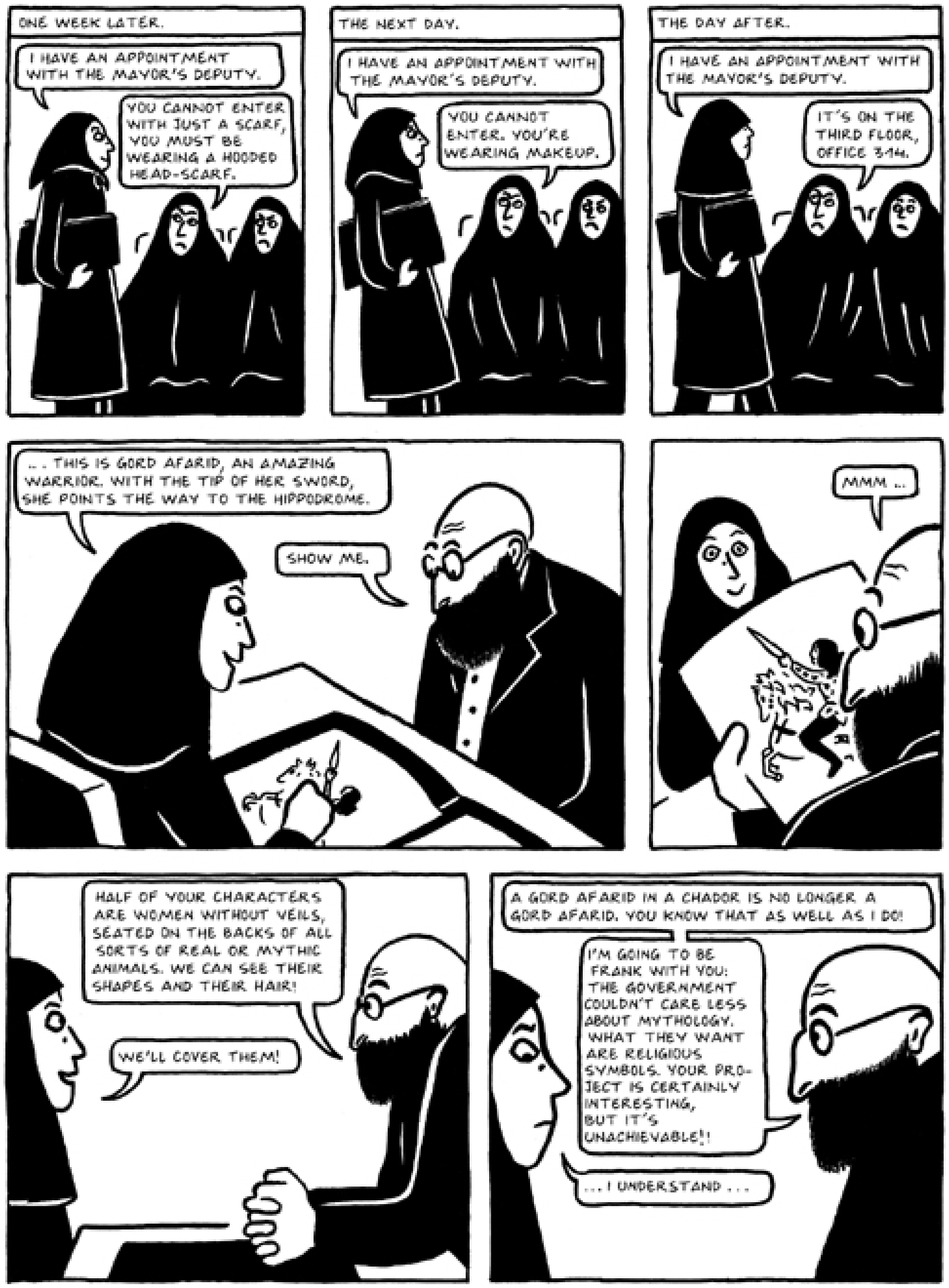

IN JUNE 1993, AT THE END OF OUR FOURTH YEAR OF STUDY, REZA AND I WERE CALLED IN BY THE PROFESSOR WHO WAS HEAD OF THE VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT.
YOU ARE MY TWO BEST STUDENTS. I THEREFORE HAVE A FINAL PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO YOU. IT INVOLVES CREATING A THEME PARK BASED ON OUR MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES.
THE SUBJECT WAS SO EXTRAORDINARY THAT WE FORGOT OUR CONFLICTS AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER.
WE SPENT THE WHOLE SUMMER IN LIBRARIES, ...
MUSEUMS, ...
WITH SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS AND DOCTORS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES.
IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, HEROES ARE PREDESTINED, WHILE OUR MYTHOLOGY IS LACKING IN THE NOTION OF DESTINY!
FROM JUNE 1993 TO JANUARY 1994, WE WERE SO BUSY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT ONCE.

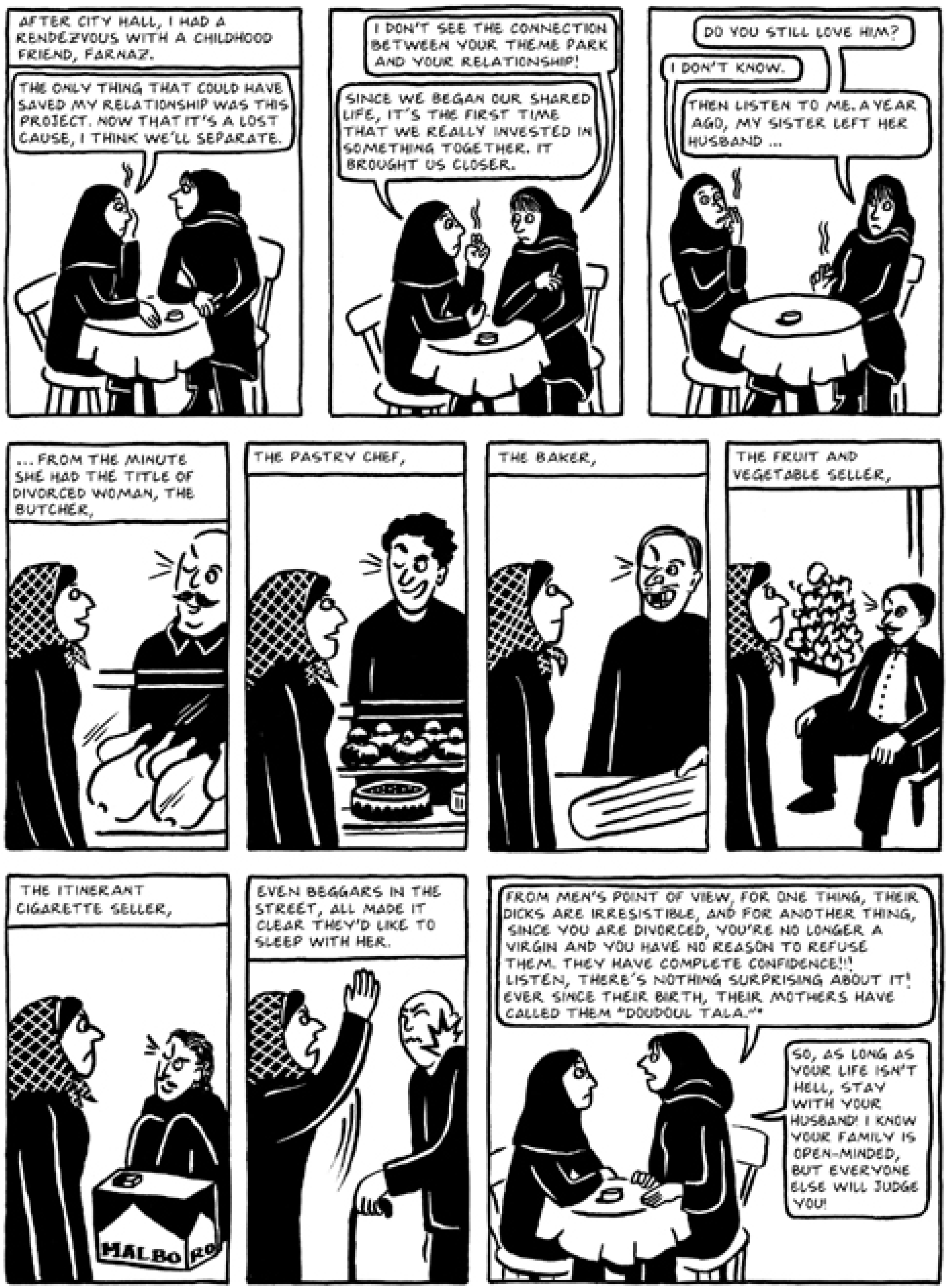
WE WANTED TO CREATE THE EQUIVALENT OF DISNEYLAND IN TEHRAN. WE HAD THOUGHT OF ALL THE DETAILS: DINING, LODGING, ATTRACTIONS...


HOTEL
RESTAURANT

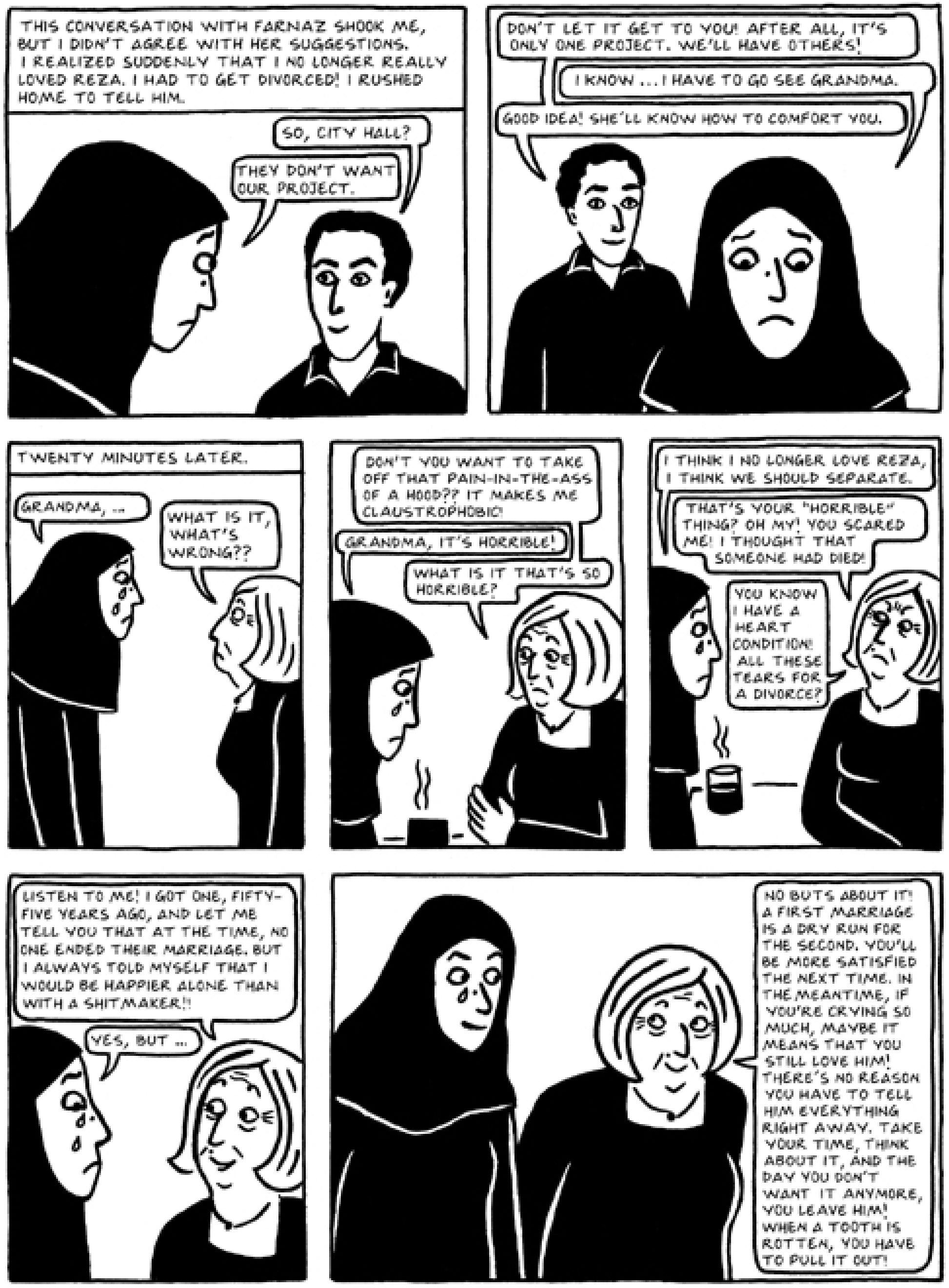
...IT WAS EXCITING.

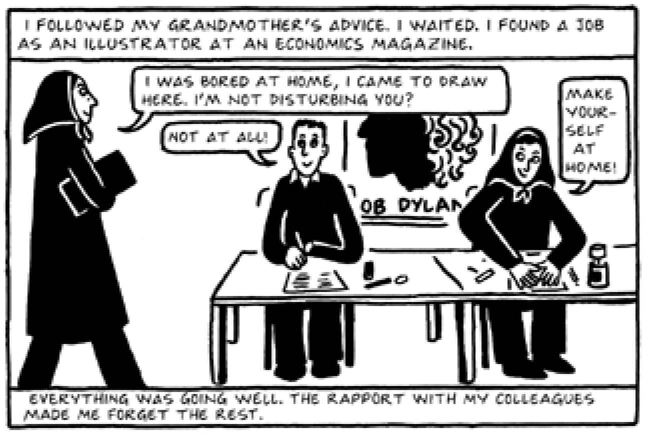

WE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY FOR SEVEN MONTHS.
FINALLY CAME THE DAY OF GRADUATION.
BEFORE THE JURY ARRIVED, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPRECIATE OUR WORK UP CLOSE.
DR. M, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE. I'M TRULY HONORED.
THE HONOR IS MINE.
SINCE I WAS A LOT MORE TALKATIVE THAN REZA, WE HAD DECIDED THAT I WOULD DEFEND OUR DISSERTATION.
OUR MYTHOLOGY IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX MYTHOLOGIES ON EARTH, BUT WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN HOW TO MINE IT, FOR FEAR OF MAKING IT VULGAR. MANY THINGS, LIKE THE HOLY GRAIL, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, ETC., ETC., COME FROM IRAN. IN OUR COUNTRY, WE HAVE THEME PARKS, BUT THE MOTIFS ARE AMERICAN. WHICH IS THE REASON BEHIND OUR INITIATIVE.
WE GOT A TWENTY OUT OF TWENTY. AFTER THE DELIBERATION ...
BRAVO, MY CHILDREN! IT WAS PERFECT! THANKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU, I STILL HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAN. YOU SHOULD PROPOSE YOUR PROJECT TO THE MAYOR OF TEHRAN. I PERSONALLY KNOW THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY. YOU CAN USE MY NAME.

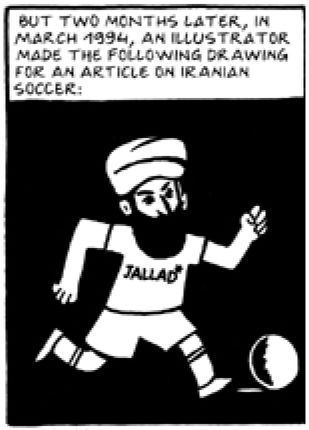

ONE WEEK LATER.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
YOU CANNOT ENTER WITH JUST A SCARF, YOU MUST BE WEARING A HOODED HEAD-SCARF.
THE NEXT DAY.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
YOU CANNOT ENTER. YOU'RE WEARING MAKEUP.
THE DAY AFTER.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
IT'S ON THE THIRD FLOOR, OFFICE 314.
... THIS IS GORD AFARID, AN AMAZING WARRIOR. WITH THE TIP OF HER SWORD, SHE POINTS THE WAY TO THE HIPPODROME.
SHOW ME.
MMM ...
HALF OF YOUR CHARACTERS ARE WOMEN WITHOUT VEILS, SEATED ON THE BACKS OF ALL SORTS OF REAL OR MYTHIC ANIMALS. WE CAN SEE THEIR SHAPES AND THEIR HAIR!
WE'LL COVER THEM!
A GORD AFARID IN A CHADOR IS NO LONGER A GORD AFARID. YOU KNOW THAT AS WELL AS I DO!
I'M GOING TO BE FRANK WITH YOU: THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT MYTHOLOGY. WHAT THEY WANT ARE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS. YOUR PROJECT IS CERTAINLY INTERESTING, BUT IT'S UNACHIEVABLE!!
... I UNDERSTAND ...


AFTER CITY HALL, I HAD A RENDEZVOUS WITH A CHILDHOOD FRIEND, FARNAZ.
THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE SAVED MY RELATIONSHIP WAS THIS PROJECT. NOW THAT IT'S A LOST CAUSE, I THINK WE'LL SEPARATE.
I DON'T SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR THEME PARK AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP!
SINCE WE BEGAN OUR SHARED LIFE, IT'S THE FIRST TIME THAT WE REALLY INVESTED IN SOMETHING TOGETHER. IT BROUGHT US CLOSER.
DO YOU STILL LOVE HIM?
I DON'T KNOW.
THEN LISTEN TO ME. A YEAR AGO, MY SISTER LEFT HER HUSBAND ...
... FROM THE MINUTE SHE HAD THE TITLE OF DIVORCED WOMAN, THE BUTCHER,
THE PASTRY CHEF,
THE BAKER,
THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELLER,
THE ITINERANT CIGARETTE SELLER,
MALBO RO
EVEN BEGGARS IN THE STREET, ALL MADE IT CLEAR THEY'D LIKE TO SLEEP WITH HER.
FROM MEN'S POINT OF VIEW, FOR ONE THING, THEIR DICKS ARE IRRESISTIBLE, AND FOR ANOTHER THING, SINCE YOU ARE DIVORCED, YOU'RE NO LONGER A VIRGIN AND YOU HAVE NO REASON TO REFUSE THEM. THEY HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE!!! LISTEN, THERE'S NOTHING SURPRISING ABOUT IT! EVER SINCE THEIR BIRTH, THEIR MOTHERS HAVE CALLED THEM "DOUDOUL TALA."*
SO, AS LONG AS YOUR LIFE ISN'T HELL, STAY WITH YOUR HUSBAND! I KNOW YOUR FAMILY IS OPEN-MINDED, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL JUDGE YOU!

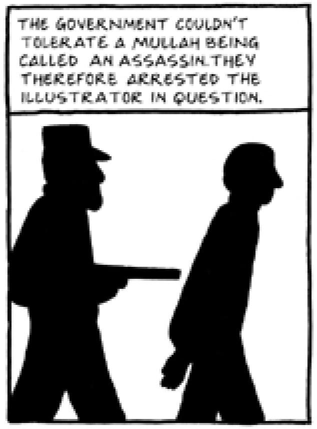
*GOLDEN PENIS

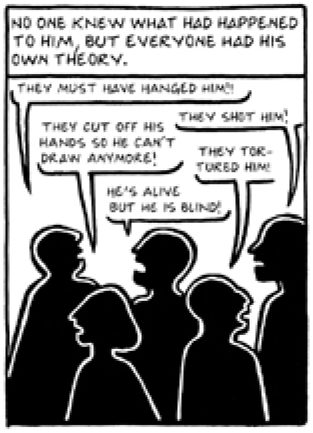

THIS CONVERSATION WITH FARNAZ SHOOK ME, BUT I DIDN'T AGREE WITH HER SUGGESTIONS. I REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT I NO LONGER REALLY LOVED REZA. I HAD TO GET DIVORCED! I RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM.
SO, CITY HALL?
THEY DON'T WANT OUR PROJECT.
DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY ONE PROJECT. WE'LL HAVE OTHERS!
I KNOW ... I HAVE TO GO SEE GRANDMA.
GOOD IDEA! SHE'LL KNOW HOW TO COMFORT YOU.
TWENTY MINUTES LATER.
GRANDMA, ...
WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S WRONG??
DON'T YOU WANT TO TAKE OFF THAT PAIN-IN-THE-ASS OF A HOOD?? IT MAKES ME CLAUSTROPHOBIC!
GRANDMA, IT'S HORRIBLE!
WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO HORRIBLE?
I THINK I NO LONGER LOVE REZA, I THINK WE SHOULD SEPARATE.
THAT'S YOUR "HORRIBLE" THING? OH MY! YOU SCARED ME! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HAD DIED!
YOU KNOW I HAVE A HEART CONDITION! ALL THESE TEARS FOR A DIVORCE?
LISTEN TO ME! I GOT ONE, FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AND LET ME TELL YOU THAT AT THE TIME, NO ONE ENDED THEIR MARRIAGE. BUT I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD BE HAPPIER ALONE THAN WITH A SHITMAKER!!
YES, BUT ...
NO BUTS ABOUT IT! A FIRST MARRIAGE IS A DRY RUN FOR THE SECOND. YOU'LL BE MORE SATISFIED THE NEXT TIME. IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU'RE CRYING SO MUCH, MAYBE IT MEANS THAT YOU STILL LOVE HIM! THERE'S NO REASON YOU HAVE TO TELL HIM EVERYTHING RIGHT AWAY. TAKE YOUR TIME, THINK ABOUT IT, AND THE DAY YOU DON'T WANT IT ANYMORE, YOU LEAVE HIM! WHEN A TOOTH IS ROTTEN, YOU HAVE TO PULL IT OUT!

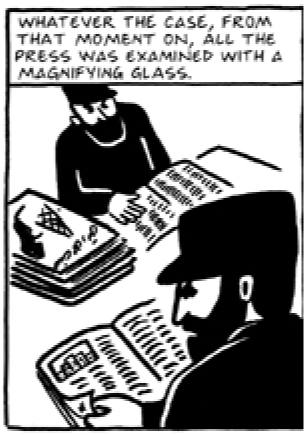

I FOLLOWED MY GRANDMOTHER'S ADVICE. I WAITED. I FOUND A JOB AS AN ILLUSTRATOR AT AN ECONOMICS MAGAZINE.
I WAS BORED AT HOME, I CAME TO DRAW HERE. I'M NOT DISTURBING YOU?
NOT AT ALL!
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!
OB DYLAN
EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL. THE RAPPORT WITH MY COLLEAGUES MADE ME FORGET THE REST.

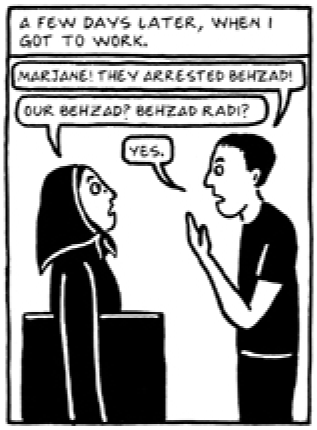

BUT TWO MONTHS LATER, IN MARCH 1994, AN ILLUSTRATOR MADE THE FOLLOWING DRAWING FOR AN ARTICLE ON IRANIAN SOCCER:
JALLAD*

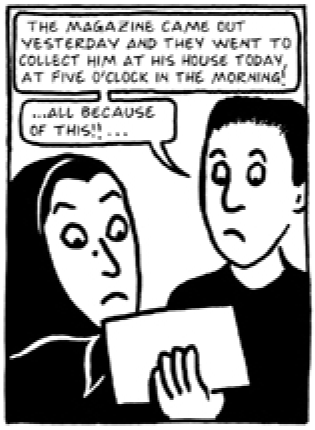
* ASSASSIN

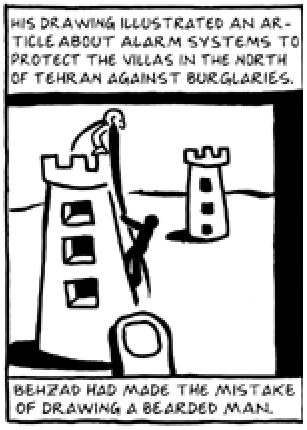

THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T TOLERATE A MULLAH BEING CALLED AN ASSASSIN. THEY THEREFORE ARRESTED THE ILLUSTRATOR IN QUESTION.

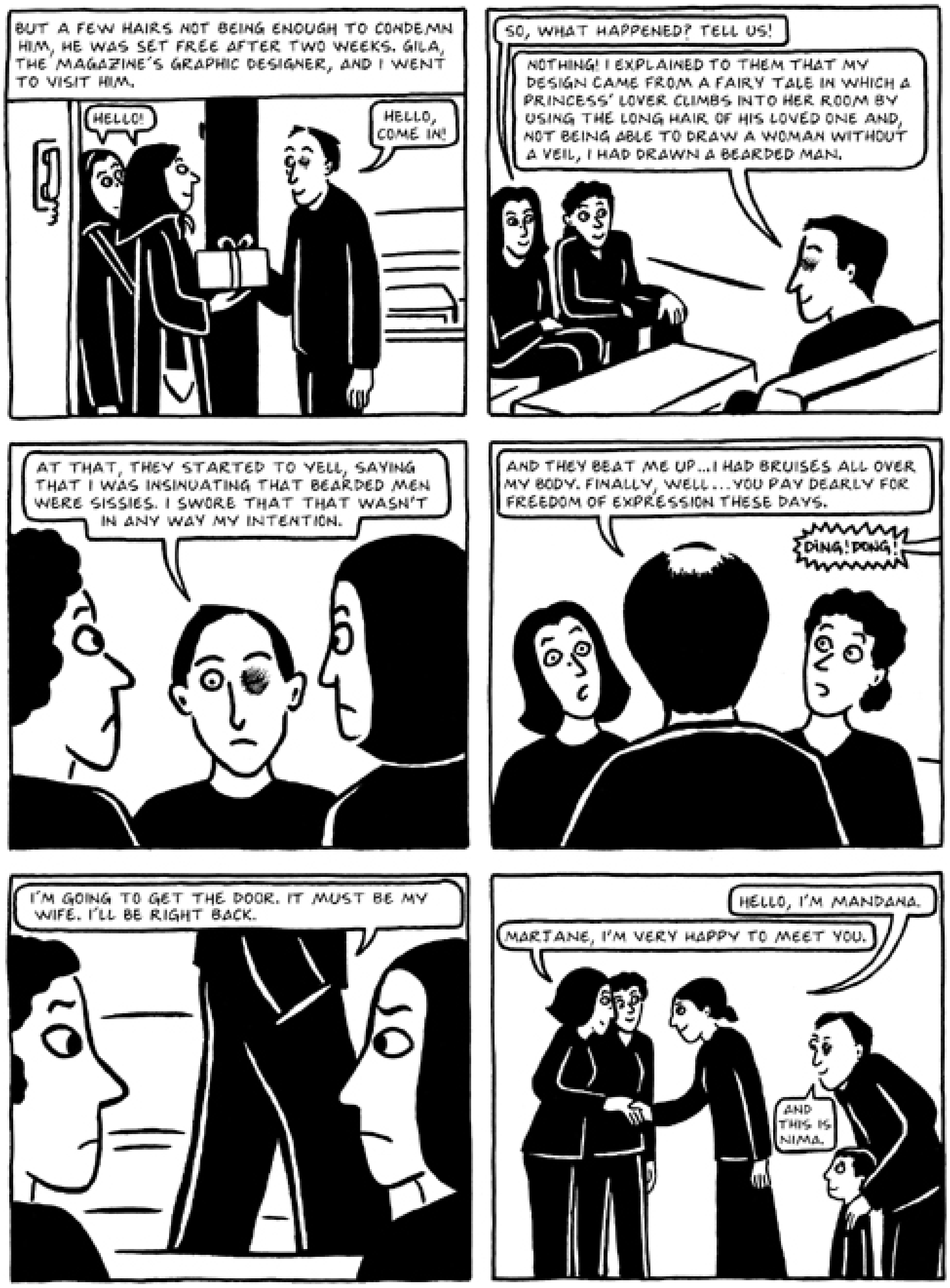

NO ONE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, BUT EVERYONE HAD HIS OWN THEORY.
THEY MUST HAVE HANGED HIM!!
THEY SHOT HIM!
THEY CUT OFF HIS HANDS SO HE CAN'T DRAW ANYMORE!
THEY TORTURED HIM!
HE'S ALIVE BUT HE IS BLIND!

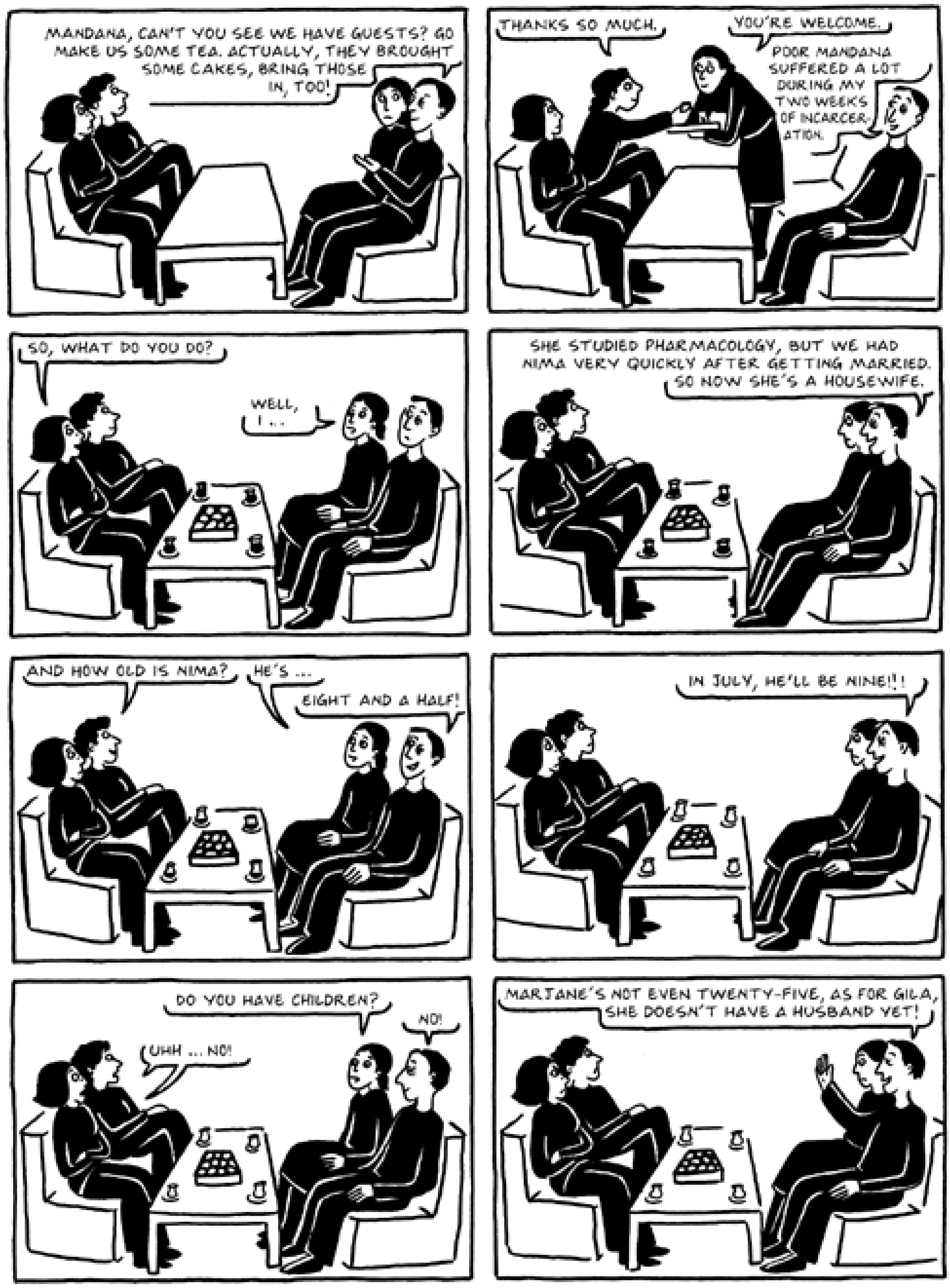

WHATEVER THE CASE, FROM THAT MOMENT ON, ALL THE PRESS WAS EXAMINED WITH A MAGNIFYING GLASS.

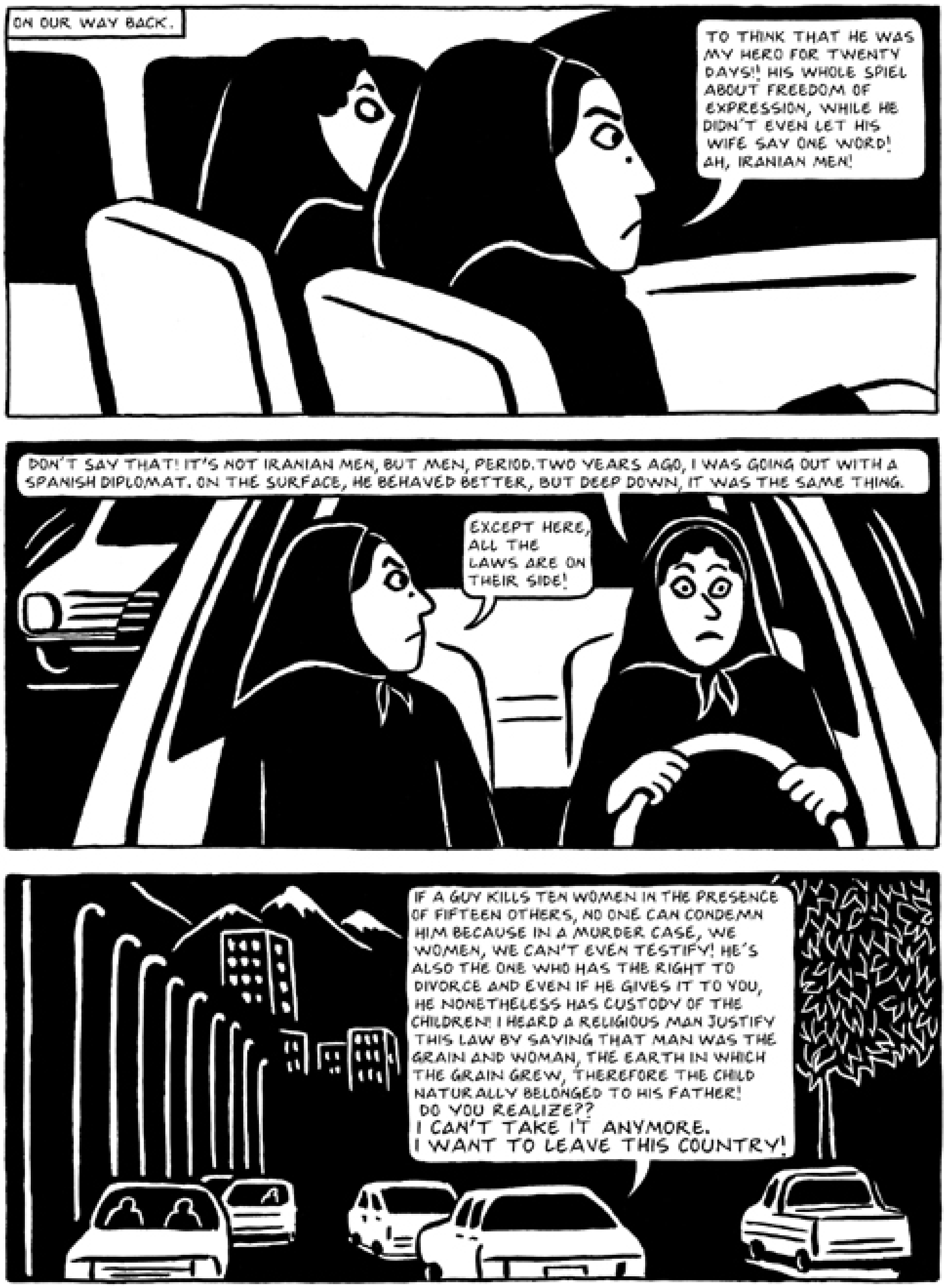

A FEW DAYS LATER, WHEN I GOT TO WORK.
MARJANE! THEY ARRESTED BEHZAD!
OUR BEHZAD? BEHZAD RADI?
YES.

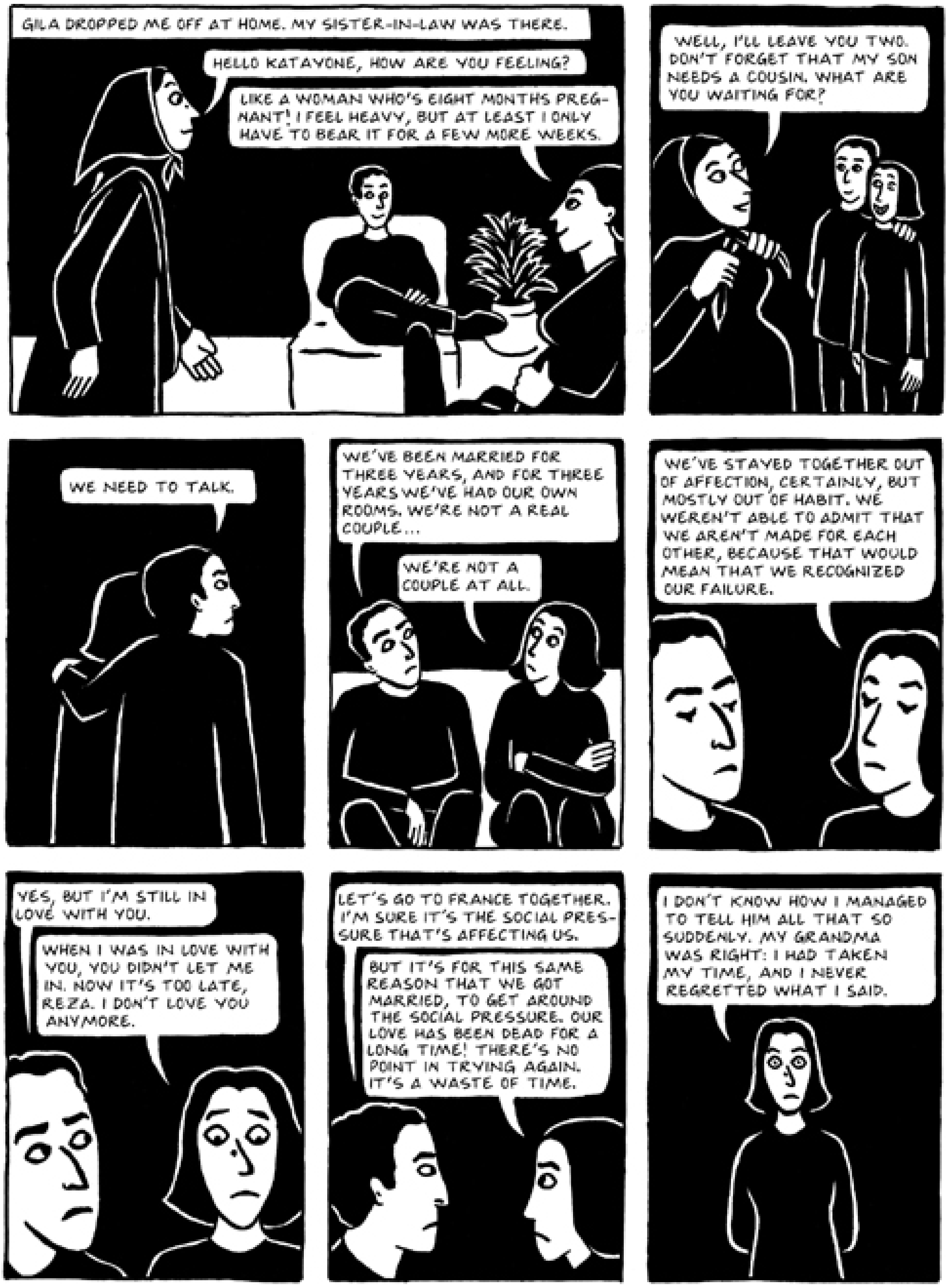

THE MAGAZINE CAME OUT YESTERDAY AND THEY WENT TO COLLECT HIM AT HIS HOUSE TODAY, AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING!
...ALL BECAUSE OF THIS!! ...

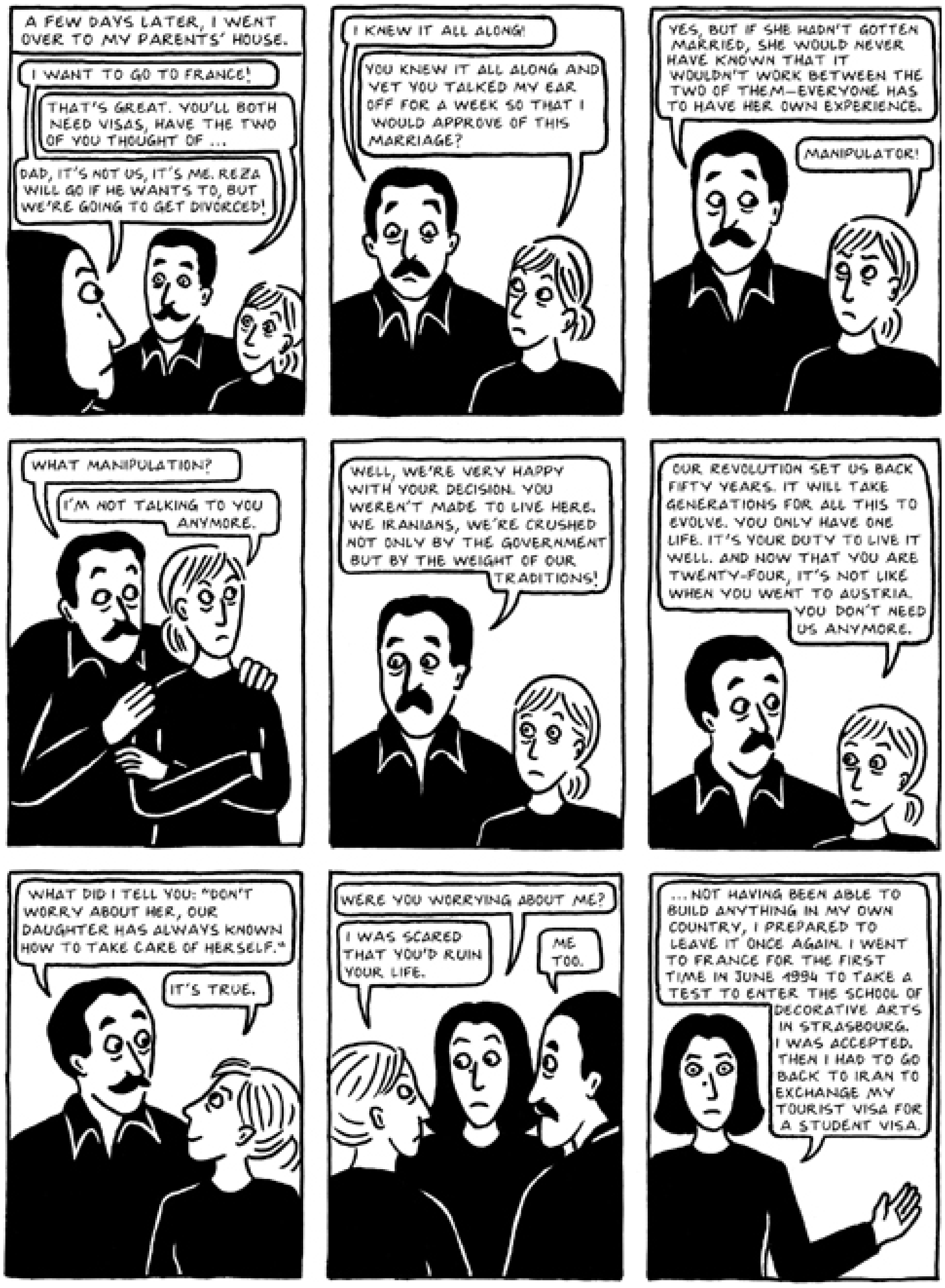

HIS DRAWING ILLUSTRATED AN ARTICLE ABOUT ALARM SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE VILLAS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN AGAINST BURGLARIES.
BEHZAD HAD MADE THE MISTAKE OF DRAWING A BEARDED MAN.


BUT A FEW HAIRS NOT BEING ENOUGH TO CONDEMN HIM, HE WAS SET FREE AFTER TWO WEEKS. GILA, THE MAGAZINE'S GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.
HELLO!
HELLO, COME IN!
SO, WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US!
NOTHING! I EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT MY DESIGN CAME FROM A FAIRY TALE IN WHICH A PRINCESS' LOVER CLIMBS INTO HER ROOM BY USING THE LONG HAIR OF HIS LOVED ONE AND, NOT BEING ABLE TO DRAW A WOMAN WITHOUT A VEIL, I HAD DRAWN A BEARDED MAN.
AT THAT, THEY STARTED TO YELL, SAYING THAT I WAS INSINUATING THAT BEARDED MEN WERE SISSIES. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.
AND THEY BEAT ME UP...I HAD BRUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL...YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.
DING! DONG!
I'M GOING TO GET THE DOOR. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
HELLO, I'M MANDANA.
MARJANE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.
AND THIS IS NIMA.

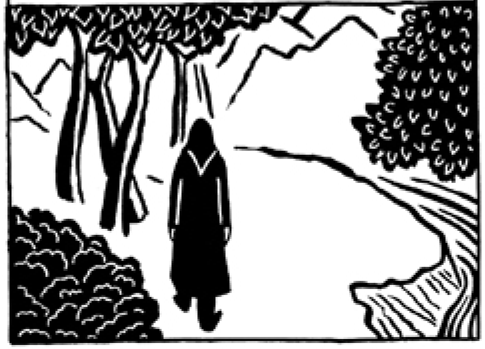

MANDANA, CAN'T YOU SEE WE HAVE GUESTS? GO MAKE US SOME TEA. ACTUALLY, THEY BROUGHT SOME CAKES, BRING THOSE IN, TOO!
THANKS SO MUCH.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
POOR MANDANA SUFFERED A LOT DURING MY TWO WEEKS OF INCARCERATION.
SO, WHAT DO YOU DO?
WELL, I...
SHE STUDIED PHARMACOLOGY, BUT WE HAD NIMA VERY QUICKLY AFTER GETTING MARRIED. SO NOW SHE'S A HOUSEWIFE.
AND HOW OLD IS NIMA?
HE'S ...
EIGHT AND A HALF!
IN JULY, HE'LL BE NINE!!!
DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?
UHH ... NO!
NO!
MARJANE'S NOT EVEN TWENTY-FIVE, AS FOR GILA, SHE DOESN'T HAVE A HUSBAND YET!


ON OUR WAY BACK.
TO THINK THAT HE WAS MY HERO FOR TWENTY DAYS!! HIS WHOLE SPIEL ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, WHILE HE DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE SAY ONE WORD! AH, IRANIAN MEN!
DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S NOT IRANIAN MEN, BUT MEN, PERIOD. TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS GOING OUT WITH A SPANISH DIPLOMAT. ON THE SURFACE, HE BEHAVED BETTER, BUT DEEP DOWN, IT WAS THE SAME THING.
EXCEPT HERE, ALL THE LAWS ARE ON THEIR SIDE!
IF A GUY KILLS TEN WOMEN IN THE PRESENCE OF FIFTEEN OTHERS, NO ONE CAN CONDEMN HIM BECAUSE IN A MURDER CASE, WE WOMEN, WE CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY! HE'S ALSO THE ONE WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO DIVORCE AND EVEN IF HE GIVES IT TO YOU, HE NONETHELESS HAS CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE GRAIN AND WOMAN, THE EARTH IN WHICH THE GRAIN GREW, THEREFORE THE CHILD NATURALLY BELONGED TO HIS FATHER! DO YOU REALIZE?? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!

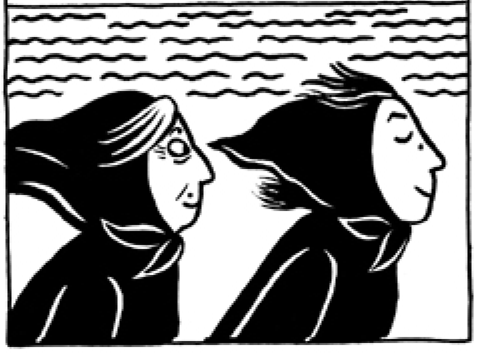

GILA DROPPED ME OFF AT HOME. MY SISTER-IN-LAW WAS THERE.
HELLO KATAYONE, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
LIKE A WOMAN WHO'S EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT! I FEEL HEAVY, BUT AT LEAST I ONLY HAVE TO BEAR IT FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS.
WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO. DON'T FORGET THAT MY SON NEEDS A COUSIN. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
WE NEED TO TALK.
WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS, AND FOR THREE YEARS WE'VE HAD OUR OWN ROOMS. WE'RE NOT A REAL COUPLE...
WE'RE NOT A COUPLE AT ALL.
WE'VE STAYED TOGETHER OUT OF AFFECTION, CERTAINLY, BUT MOSTLY OUT OF HABIT. WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ADMIT THAT WE AREN'T MADE FOR EACH OTHER, BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN THAT WE RECOGNIZED OUR FAILURE.
YES, BUT I'M STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU.
WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU, YOU DIDN'T LET ME IN. NOW IT'S TOO LATE, REZA. I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE.
LET'S GO TO FRANCE TOGETHER. I'M SURE IT'S THE SOCIAL PRESSURE THAT'S AFFECTING US.
BUT IT'S FOR THIS SAME REASON THAT WE GOT MARRIED, TO GET AROUND THE SOCIAL PRESSURE. OUR LOVE HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME! THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING AGAIN. IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I MANAGED TO TELL HIM ALL THAT SO SUDDENLY. MY GRANDMA WAS RIGHT: I HAD TAKEN MY TIME, AND I NEVER REGRETTED WHAT I SAID.


A FEW DAYS LATER, I WENT OVER TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE.
I WANT TO GO TO FRANCE!
THAT'S GREAT. YOU'LL BOTH NEED VISAS, HAVE THE TWO OF YOU THOUGHT OF ...
DAD, IT'S NOT US, IT'S ME. REZA WILL GO IF HE WANTS TO, BUT WE'RE GOING TO GET DIVORCED!
I KNEW IT ALL ALONG!
YOU KNEW IT ALL ALONG AND YET YOU TALKED MY EAR OFF FOR A WEEK SO THAT I WOULD APPROVE OF THIS MARRIAGE?
YES, BUT IF SHE HADN'T GOTTEN MARRIED, SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WOULDN'T WORK BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM—EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE HER OWN EXPERIENCE.
MANIPULATOR!
WHAT MANIPULATION?
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU ANYMORE.
WELL, WE'RE VERY HAPPY WITH YOUR DECISION. YOU WEREN'T MADE TO LIVE HERE. WE IRANIANS, WE'RE CRUSHED NOT ONLY BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT BY THE WEIGHT OF OUR TRADITIONS!
OUR REVOLUTION SET US BACK FIFTY YEARS. IT WILL TAKE GENERATIONS FOR ALL THIS TO EVOLVE. YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE. IT'S YOUR DUTY TO LIVE IT WELL. AND NOW THAT YOU ARE TWENTY-FOUR, IT'S NOT LIKE WHEN YOU WENT TO AUSTRIA. YOU DON'T NEED US ANYMORE.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU: "DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER, OUR DAUGHTER HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF."
IT'S TRUE.
WERE YOU WORRYING ABOUT ME?
I WAS SCARED THAT YOU'D RUIN YOUR LIFE.
ME TOO.
... NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO BUILD ANYTHING IN MY OWN COUNTRY, I PREPARED TO LEAVE IT ONCE AGAIN. I WENT TO FRANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JUNE 1994 TO TAKE A TEST TO ENTER THE SCHOOL OF DECORATIVE ARTS IN STRASBOURG. I WAS ACCEPTED. THEN I HAD TO GO BACK TO IRAN TO EXCHANGE MY TOURIST VISA FOR A STUDENT VISA.

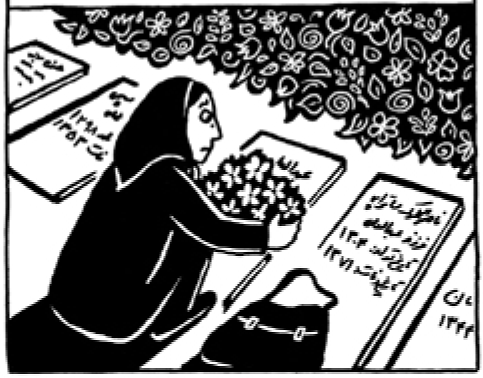
BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER '94, THE DATE OF MY DEFINITIVE DEPARTURE, I SPENT EVERY MORNING WANDERING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TEHRAN, WHERE I MEMORIZED EVERY CORNER.



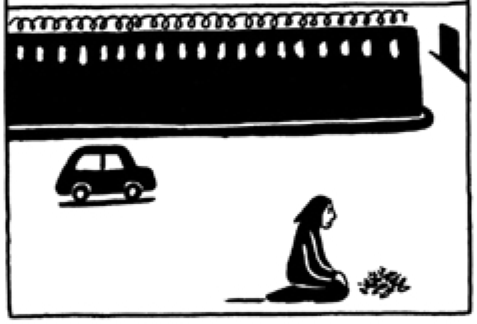
I WENT ON A TRIP WITH MY GRANDMA TO THE SHORE OF THE CASPIAN SEA, WHERE I FILLED MY LUNGS WITH THAT VERY SPECIAL AIR. THAT AIR THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.



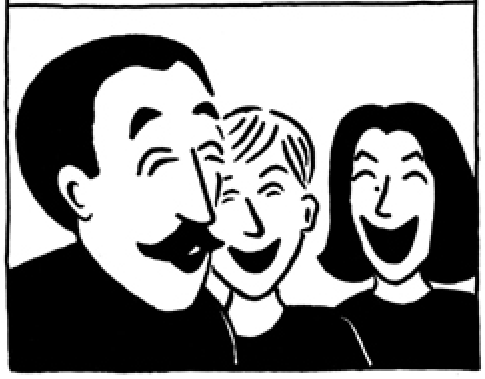
I WENT TO MY GRANDFATHER'S TOMB, WHERE I PROMISED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.



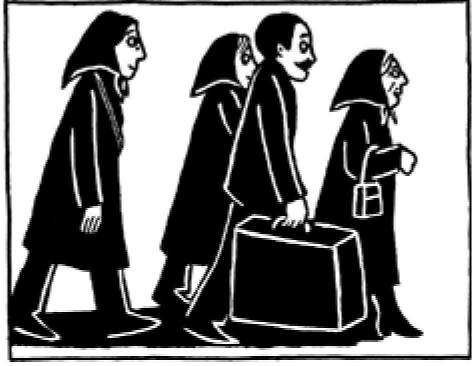
I ALSO WENT BEHIND THE EVINE PRISON WHERE THE BODY OF MY UNCLE ANOOSH LAY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, NEXT TO THOUSANDS OF OTHER CADAVERS. I GAVE HIM MY WORD TO TRY TO REMAIN AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE.

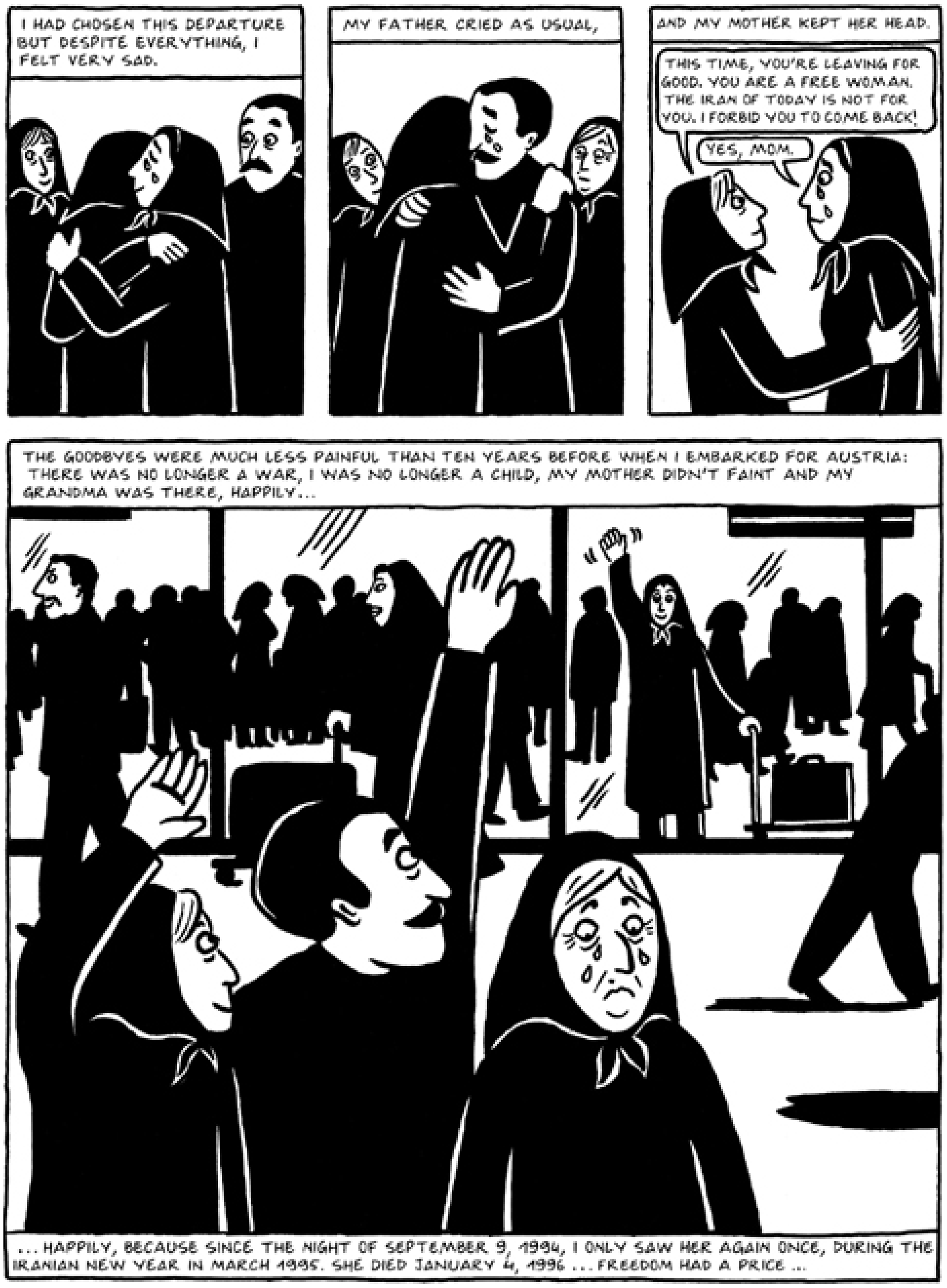


I ALSO SPENT SOME WONDERFUL MOMENTS WITH MY PARENTS ...



... UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, WHEN, ALONG WITH MY GRANDMA, THEY ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEHRABAD AIRPORT.




I HAD CHOSEN THIS DEPARTURE BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING, I FELT VERY SAD.
MY FATHER CRIED AS USUAL,
AND MY MOTHER KEPT HER HEAD.
THIS TIME, YOU'RE LEAVING FOR GOOD. YOU ARE A FREE WOMAN. THE IRAN OF TODAY IS NOT FOR YOU. I FORBID YOU TO COME BACK!
YES, MOM.
THE GOODBYES WERE MUCH LESS PAINFUL THAN TEN YEARS BEFORE WHEN I EMBARKED FOR AUSTRIA: THERE WAS NO LONGER A WAR, I WAS NO LONGER A CHILD, MY MOTHER DIDN'T FAINT AND MY GRANDMA WAS THERE, HAPPILY...
... HAPPILY, BECAUSE SINCE THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, I ONLY SAW HER AGAIN ONCE, DURING THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR IN MARCH 1995. SHE DIED JANUARY 4, 1996 ... FREEDOM HAD A PRICE ...

## CREDITS

Translation of first part of *Persepolis*: Mattias Ripa

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